

us something to *swallow*, something to *inject*; not something to *do*; not something which will need the exercise of patience, effort, self-restraint, and, perhaps, even an element of self-sacrifice for a time."

The following letter, which I was impelled to write, explains itself, and will suffice to illustrate the kind of difficulty we have had to contend with at Orokonui on account of the erroneous preconceptions both of patients and their friends. The letter has been altered merely in a few unessential details, in order to prevent identification:—

SIR,—

Orokonui Home, Waitati, ———, 1903.

You ask me to pardon the liberty you take in writing as you do concerning your brother, and I do so freely, in spite of all that your letter implies.

Your affection for your brother has obviously blinded you to all other considerations, and you have accepted unquestioningly what he has seen fit to say concerning his treatment at Orokonui. It does not seem to have occurred to you that the statements contained in his two letters might be without foundation, and I assume from this that you have not realised how absolutely depraved the moral nature frequently becomes in alcoholics, especially in regard to truthfulness. It is painful to have to enforce upon you the gravity of the malady from which Mr. ——— suffers, but it is my duty to let you know that there is no condition known to us as physicians which is liable to so entirely pervert a human being's sense of truth and honour, and to so completely strip him of altruistic qualities, as chronic alcoholism. If there is one effect of alcohol upon the moral nature which stands out more prominently than another, it is that in a certain proportion of cases the quality of truthfulness is absolutely blotted out. There is no form or degree of deceit and lying to which such an alcoholic will not resort in order to enlist sympathy, to convey to all who will hear him his sense of the wrong or persecution which he has endured, and to bring about the removal of any form of regulation or restriction to which his friends may have been compelled to subject him on his own behalf and to save him from himself. I am surprised that you should be in entire ignorance of the fact that no reliance can be placed on your brother's statements. From the tone in which you have written, on the bare authority of his letters, I can only assume that you have not been closely associated with him for a long time, and that the change which has come over his moral nature has not dawned upon you.

You appear to have no doubts on the following points, viz:—

1. The Orokonui Home is "nothing but a jail," and Mr. ——— is "simply shut up so that he cannot get drink."
2. He has been entirely neglected by myself and others since admission, and "has had no medicine of any kind given to him."
3. He is set to do work for which he is unfit, and "has to work hard digging up scrub."
4. "He is feeling his position acutely, and his mental depression is something dreadful."
5. "He says he cannot sleep at night, his brain is going night and day," and you are afraid that if he cannot be got to sleep, "he will break down altogether."

Mr. ——— arrived at Orokonui at night by the express train. I saw him the next day, and spent fully an hour with him on the day following, investigating thoroughly his state of mind and body.

The following are extracts from the report in the official case-book: "When patient arrived at the Home he was too intoxicated to get upstairs without help, and admitted that he had drunk a flask of whisky on the journey." He was given a laxative and a drink of hot milk-and-water, and after having a hot bath was put to bed, but "he was very restless and sleepless all night. For an hour or so he kept calling out for brandy and soda; thought he was driving sheep, and kept whistling and calling to his dogs. There was no vomiting; his tongue was slightly yellow; his temperature 96° 8', and his pulse 74. His bowels moved after breakfast, and he seemed much better. During the day he took about five pints of milk, and some toast, &c., and he slept well at night." Then follows an account of the results of my detailed examination, and an entry of the medicine prescribed for him to be taken three times a day. This medicine he has been taking ever since, until it was finished a few days ago. The official daily record kept by the Manager shows that the patient slept badly the first night, but that he has been sleeping well ever since. I have repeatedly inquired as to his sleeping, and he has told me that he slept well. As to being in gaol, he has had liberty to walk about the estate of some 850 acres with his fellow-patients, and to play billiards, &c.

He was not asked to do any work until he had been in the institution for about half a week; then I myself took him to assist at pulling down some light manuka scrub, which had been burned a few years previously, and, being decayed at the ground-level, was easily snapped off. It is the lightest form of work one could think of, entailing infinitely less exertion than any form of digging, unless a man chooses to set himself to tackle the few larger shrubs, which need the use of an axe. After working at this for about a quarter of an hour a shower threatened. The rest of the party sought shelter in a tent close by, and I took him back to the Home, telling him that it would be well not to do too much at the start. He then spent his morning playing billiards. Since then Mr. ——— has gained strength rapidly, and has each day done a little more work, until now (a fortnight after the date of his admission) he is out working lightly, with frequent spells, on an average about five hours a day when fine. However, the weather has been changeable, and there have been several wet days on which no work could be done. During the present week we started grubbing some gorse on the flat near the Home, and it is apparently to this work that your brother refers so piteously. Curiously enough, when your letter arrived yesterday morning, it was brought across to me to where I was engaged grubbing out some gorse with a mattock, while your brother beside me was keeping a bonfire fed with a pitchfork. The following conversation ensued:—Dr. King: "Well, how did you sleep last night?" Mr. ———: "Oh, like a top. I have slept well ever since the first night." Dr. King: "You're really looking very well. I suppose you are feeling pretty fit?" Mr. ———: "I never felt better in my life. I'd go to that pig-hunt on Monday, only I'm afraid the country is too rough."

[It was arranged early in the week that a fishing-picnic to Karitane was to take place on Saturday. Mr. ——— decided to attend, but said he would not accept my offer that he should spend the Sunday there boating, and then accompany Dr. Alexander and some of the patients on the pig-hunting expedition on Monday and Tuesday.] Dr. King: "How are you getting on at the billiards?" Mr. ———: "Oh, fairly well, but I haven't had many games during the week, because we are engaged on a tournament. I don't know how I shall fare, because I am pitted against a good player; he has to give me ——— points, though." Dr. King: "Well, I suppose you don't find life so irksome as you expected?" Mr. ———: "Oh, no, it's right enough; but, of course, I would rather be at large." I have repeatedly had similar conversations with Mr. ———, and I say, without any hesitation whatever, that the statements he has made to you are absolutely untrue. He eats well, looks well, sleeps well, and says is he well. It would be a strange and not a very hopeful sign if a man born and bred with the social advantages that Mr. ——— has had, felt no remorse and shame at having reduced himself to the plane in which he now is, but that is a matter which neither I nor any other human being can obliterate.

Neither have we any powers or healing arts such as you assume. There is no drug or substance known which will "cure" a drunkard of his drinking habit, and it is not true, as you have heard, that I have "cured many cases of drunkards" at Orokonui. It will be time enough some three years hence to say how many have permanently recovered of the forty-odd unfortunates who have placed themselves or been placed under our care and treatment; and we shall have succeeded beyond the success of similar institutions in England if 20 per cent. of cases recover permanently.

People are, with excellent reason, afraid of small-pox, from which 75 per cent. of cases recover, and yet they little realise that beside the malady which has come to pass in your brother's case small-pox is a simple and innocent disease. A pockmarked skin is no doubt disfiguring, but compared with the irreparable scarring and blasting by alcohol of the delicate cells upon which all that is noblest and best in humanity depends the ravages of small-pox are trivial and of no account.

I regret to say that the prognosis in your brother's case is unfavourable. I do not think that he will recover.

2—H. 22A.