

# An Evaluation Of An Eccentric:

Matthew Allen MD, Chemical Philosopher, Phrenologist,  
Pedagogue and Mad-Doctor, 1783-1845

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## SUMMARY

This thesis re-evaluates the early nineteenth-century treatment of insanity and evaluates, for the first time, the work amongst the insane of Matthew Allen MD. It is written in the form of a biography, the primary source of which is the unpublished manuscript *Memoirs of Oswald Allen* held in the York Reference Library. Other relevant documents and letters have been found in the Essex County Record Office and in archives in Lincoln, Northampton, Dundee, York and Holborn. A variety of literary sources in libraries across the country and books which Allen wrote have been used.

The thesis is eight chapters in length and divided into four chronological parts. It contributes to the history of psychiatry at an important, but often neglected period and provides details of a man whose name has been previously known only because of his connection with major literary figures. For the first time information is brought together to reveal his contribution to the treatment of the insane and his involvement with other aspects of culture. He is revealed as a pioneer rather than a genius. He sought for causes of insanity and effective counteractions and showed his increasing belief in psychological over physical causes. He maintained faith in the efficacy of Moral Treatment even when under pressure from his colleagues to focus on other stratagems.

Allen's childhood and youth were affected by an obscure religious sect. His personality was deeply flawed. He was gaoled twice and suffered two bankruptcies. He nearly cured one poet while bringing another to the verge of mental collapse. His personal struggles aided his understanding of insanity but finally led to his own professional downfall. The conclusion is that the principles for which he stood in treating the insane were early, but genuine, precursors to modern psychiatric practice, often obscured by later nineteenth-century attitudes and treatments.

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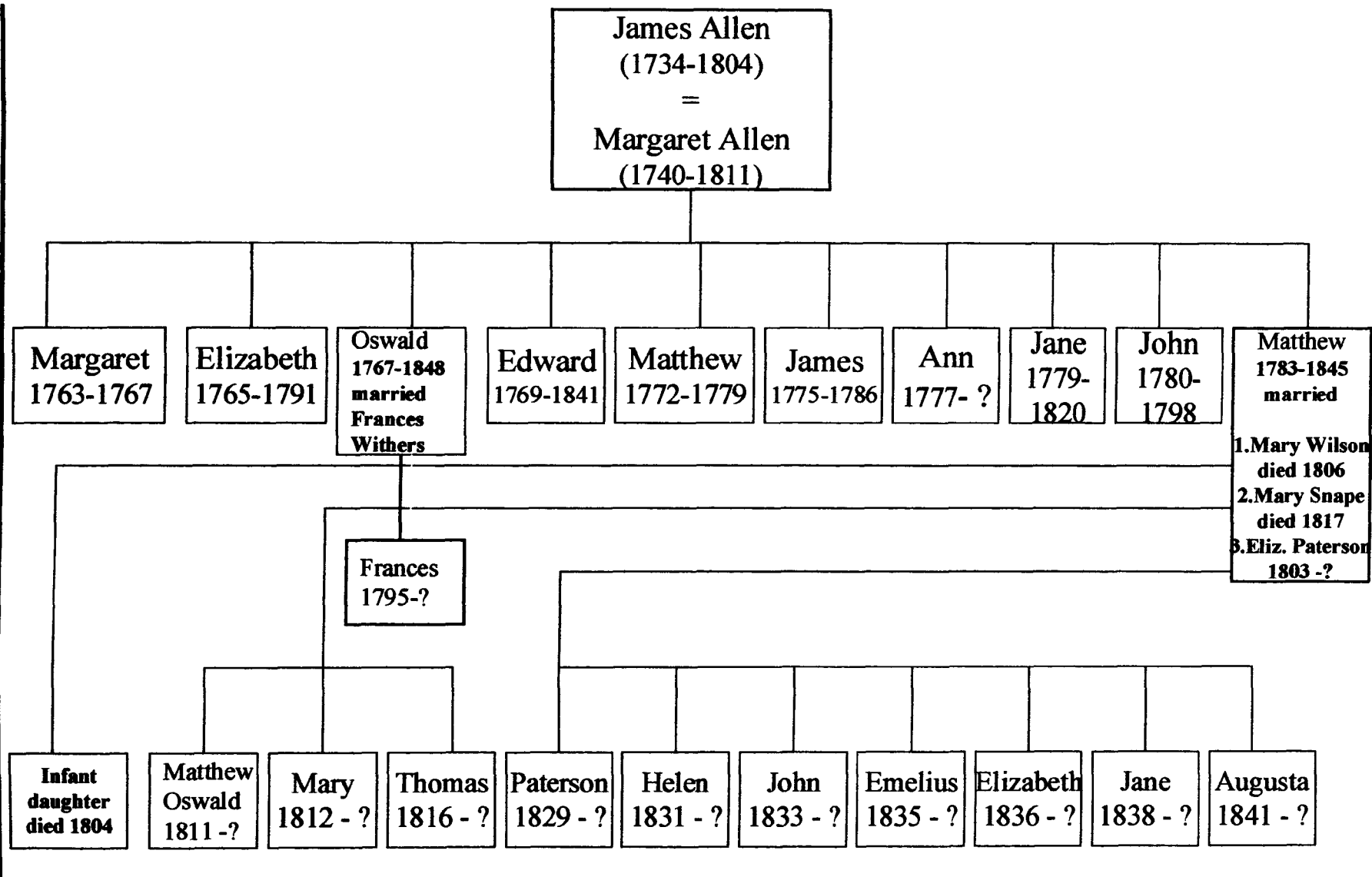
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**Section of Allen Family Tree**

**Figure 1**



## CHRONOLOGY

- 1781 Oswald Allen (aged 14) the oldest living son of James and Margaret Allen leaves Gayle for York to begin his apprenticeship as an Apothecary /Surgeon.
- 1783 Matthew Allen born at Gayle in Wensleydale, the 10th and last child of James and Margaret Allen.
- 1788 Oswald finishes his apprenticeship.
- 1789 Francis Whaley dies and Oswald inherits his business (Surgeon/Apothecary practice and chemist shop).
- 1790 Oswald Allen marries Frances Withers.
- 1798 John Allen goes to York as Oswald's apprentice and dies after falling from his horse.
- 1799 Matthew Allen goes to York at the age of 16 to be apprenticed to Oswald.
- 1802 Matthew marries for the first time to Mary Wilson of Newby, Yorks.
- 1803 James Allen dies aged 70.
- 1804 Matthew Allen's first child dies a few hours after birth.
- 1806 Mary Allen, Matthew's wife, dies of brain fever.  
Matthew completes his apprenticeship and gains his MRCS.
- 1807 -1808 Matriculates for his first academic year at Edinburgh Medical School.
- 1809 Spends a year in London continuing his medical studies.
- 1810 or 11 Marries 2nd wife, Mary Snape of Chester and Wigan.  
They settle in Edinburgh and open a chemist shop.  
Matthew matriculates for the academic year 1811-1812.  
First son Matthew Oswald born.
- 1812 Daughter Mary Ann born.
- 1813 Matriculates for the 1813-1814 academic year.  
Visited by Oswald, who along with their cousin Edward Wilson finances the purchase of a chemical works.  
Soda water production commenced by Matthew himself.  
Attends extra-mural lectures.  
Imprisoned for debt for drugs purchased from Bevans of London.  
Released and goes to his parents-in-law in Wigan.  
Declared bankrupt.
- 1814 Returns to Edinburgh and matriculates for 1814-1815.
- 1815 Imprisoned in November for failing to pay tax on Soda Water.
- 1816 Leaves Edinburgh at the end of February for Perth and commences lectures on Chemical Philosophy.  
Fails to graduate.  
Son Thomas born in April.
- 1817 Feb-Mar lectures on Chemical Philosophy at Kirkcaldy.  
Becomes reacquainted with fellow students Thomas Carlyle and Edward Irving.  
April - death of his second wife Mary, née Snape.  
October, lectures on Phrenology for the first time, at Kirkcaldy.  
Publishes *Outlines on a Course of Lectures on Chemical Philosophy*.  
Writes a series of seven essays *On Chemical Philosophy* for the *Philosophical Magazine*.  
August - begins work as Superintendent/Apothecary at the York Asylum.  
Publishes *Lectures on the Temper and Spirit of Christianity*.  
Thomas Carlyle visits York.  
Gains a MD from Marischal College, Aberdeen University.
- 1824 August - visits London and Paris, possibly with Samuel Tuke.  
Matthew Allen resigns as superintendent of the York Asylum.  
Lectures on phrenology in Hull.

- George Cooke becomes his benefactor.  
 November/December - Purchases his own asylum at High Beech, Epping Forest, Essex and receives his first patient.
- 1825 March - April, lectures on phrenology in Leeds and Wakefield.
- 1829 Fairmead House and Leopard's Hill Lodge extensively renovated and modernised.  
 Marries his third wife Elizabeth Paterson from Scotland.  
 Thom Campbell becomes a patient at High Beech.  
 William Montagu becomes one of Allen's patients.
- 1831 Cases of Insanity published. Second edition of Devotional Lectures (Lectures on the Temper and Spirit...).
- 1832 Allen versus Dutton. Allen sues for non-payment of fees. Dutton accuses him of cruelty and neglect of his wife. Allen wins the case.
- 1834 Second edition reprint of *Lectures on the Temper and Spirit of Christianity*.
- 1835 Springfield, the women's residence is built.
- 1837 John Taylor publishes Allen's *Essay on the Treatment of the Insane*.
- 1838 John Clare comes under Allen's care at High Beech.  
 Patient numbers reach a peak at 52 residents.  
*What is Truth?* published in the *Anthropological and Christian Physician*.
- 1839 Septimus Tennyson becomes a patient at High Beech.
- 1840 Alfred Tennyson stays at High Beech asylum for the first time.  
 The production of Pyroglyphs commences. Tennyson invests in the company.
- 1841 July - John Clare absconds and returns home to Northamptonshire.  
 November - A number of the Tennyson family invest in the Pyroglyph scheme.
- 1842 The rift in Allen's friendship with Alfred Tennyson becomes final.
- 1843 December - Allen declared a bankrupt for the second time in his life.
- 1844 Allen censured in the House of Commons for housing uncertificated patients etc.  
 September - Chancery Court of inquiry into Thom Campbell's lunacy.  
 Thom declared sane.
- 1845 January - Matthew Allen dies suddenly of a heart attack. His wife, Elizabeth, decides to continue running the asylum

## NOTE ON SOURCES

I first became interested in Matthew Allen when writing a dissertation on John Clare for my MA degree. Having read J. W. & A. Tibbles' marvellous biography of the poet, I then consulted the London University library catalogue for information about the doctor from Essex, who followed enlightened treatment, and had been so kind to Clare. I found nothing. I did not realise that all the books Dr Allen had written were now kept only in collections of rare books at the British Library and at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine and in some major medical libraries in the United States, and that virtually nothing had been written about him or was known about him.

In following my interest in the history of medicine I discovered Dr Margaret Barnet's article in *Medical History*, 'Matthew Allen MD (Aberdeen), 1783-1845' written in 1965 based on *The Memoirs of Oswald Allen*, a five hundred page manuscript in the York Reference library. This considerably increased my knowledge of Dr Matthew Allen, Oswald's youngest brother. Before commencing my thesis I read parts of this manuscript for myself and was given permission by the librarian to photocopy it, in order to work on it at home. Dr Barnet also kindly wrote to me about how she discovered the memoirs and lent me her notes on the article she wrote about them.

Some of my sources have been oral. For information about the Sandemanians I have spoken to two of their last remaining adherents, in Edinburgh, who allowed me to transcribe information from diaries and notebooks which they hold and from some of John Glas's original letters. One of them also gave me a copy of the book edited by Daniel Mackintosh, *Letters in Correspondence by Robert Sandeman, John Glas and their Contemporaries*, of which only two hundred and fifty copies were privately printed in 1851. Other information on Sandemanianism was found in the collection held in Dundee University archives. I also spoke to, and was given a guided tour round Gayle in West Yorkshire by, Mr James Alderson who had written articles on James Allen and known many of his descendants. He was able to put me in touch with the last surviving Oswald Allen, in Newark-on-Trent who sent me a very large Allen family tree, copies of wills and a copy of the deed for the Sandemanian chapel in Gayle which James Allen owned.

I spent two days in Chester discovering, at the City and County record offices the meagre information available about Matthew Allen's correspondent, who had lived there in 1806, Dr Fawcett. Though a passing acquaintance, he seemed to have a lasting influence upon Allen. The results of this

research are summarised at the beginning of chapter two.

Matthew Allen's academic record and the dates of his matriculations were supplied by the archives of the Edinburgh Medical School in return to a postal inquiry.

For documents and archival information about The York Asylum, before and during Allen's time there, I consulted the catalogue and relevant material at the Borthwick Institute in York. The few remaining records of High Beech Asylum, the essential 'Visitors Book' and beautiful pictures, and four-foot by three-foot architects plan can all be viewed at the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford.

In seeking information about Allen's phrenological lectures, little exact information in record offices, libraries, collections and newspapers was found, but the archive of the Lit & Phil Societies, held in the Brotherton Library at Leeds University, was most helpful. I also found C. Hewitt Watson's book *Statistics on Phrenology* held information about Allen not found elsewhere, as does Allen's unique little pamphlet *Outlines on a Course of Lectures on Chemical Philosophy* which is found only in the rare books section of the Wellcome Institute library. Though supposedly a syllabus of Allen's lectures its contents are largely about his personal history.

Roger Cooter's references to Allen in his books especially in *Phrenology in the British Isles: An Annotated Historical Biobibliography*, where he gives a complete list of books and articles written by Allen and about him, gave me plenty of material with which to start my research. Without this it would have been difficult to trace articles written by Allen.

No portrait of Matthew Allen or any of his family has ever been discovered. He died just too early for photography, but daguerreotype pictures could still exist somewhere. The thesis contains several accounts of Allen's patients and of visits to his asylum and to other asylums by others which have never been published in modern form. A note is given where this is so. Several modern published accounts of nineteenth century asylums e.g. Ticehurst and Northampton General Lunatic Asylum have been quoted.



AN EVALUATION OF AN ECCENTRIC: MATTHEW ALLEN MD:  
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INTRODUCTION

Matthew Allen has previously been known as the man who looked after the mad poet, John Clare, and who caused Alfred Tennyson to lose his fortune.<sup>1</sup> Just as John Clare is considered a poet of the Romantic School and yet lived and wrote twenty years into the Victorian era, long after all the major Romantic poets, even Wordsworth, were dead; so with Allen. He was a Regency gentleman who lived only seven years into Victoria's reign yet touched the lives of many Victorian figures and cared for the insane using methods far in advance of pre-Victorian practice. He bridged two eras. He was a friend and neighbour of the minor poet William Sotheby who had associated with Walter Scott and Lord Byron, Regency men, but was also acquainted with those pillars of Victorian society Alfred Tennyson and Thomas Carlyle. He is believed to have once offered Carlyle accommodation at his lunatic asylum for forty pounds per annum including the use of a horse.<sup>2</sup>

Victorian society often found eccentrics embarrassing. As the century moved on conforming to social patterns became more and more essential for acceptance into society. So to Carlyle and those who gathered society around them, men like Allen became a butt for their humour. To Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Allen was a joke which he shared with his brother, when he wrote to him in May 1839. He said that he had recently dined with the millionaire John Marshall and among the guests was Crabbe Robinson. The latter, said Carlyle, had also been in the audience when he had given a series of lectures, as had several other distinguished persons — Sydney Smith, the bishop of Norwich, and Lady Byron. This must have sounded rather self-congratulatory so for contrapuntal effect he also added — 'Matthew Allen!' — who, in Carlyle's opinion, was anything but distinguished.<sup>3</sup>

Carlyle had not always seen Allen in this light. They had first met at Edinburgh University as fellow students between 1809 and 1814. They had met again in 1817 when Carlyle was teaching in Kirkcaldy and Allen lectured there on chemical philosophy. Later that year Carlyle heard Allen lecture

again — this time on phrenology — and thought him muddled and slightly mad, but there were extenuating circumstances for this, as shall be seen. They corresponded for a time and in October 1820 Carlyle visited Allen in York where the latter was superintendent at the York Asylum. Allen went to great lengths to entertain the young Scotsman who had come to York seeking a place as a tutor. Despite failing in this, Carlyle found the visit very much to his liking.<sup>4</sup>

Before Carlyle made his name, he easily welcomed Allen's friendship. So much so that he invited Allen to spend Christmas with him in Edinburgh in 1821. The reason why Allen failed to respond to this invitation is unknown. Allen had offered Carlyle a job as his secretary at the York Asylum. Carlyle declined, proposing instead, a friend recently qualified as a surgeon. Carlyle, considering himself suitable for work requiring more intellectual gifts, was perhaps a little bemused with the offer, which, Allen naively failed to see, could have been interpreted as an insult.

In later years Carlyle tended to hold the Doctor at bay and Allen's attempts to be included amongst the Carlyles' intimate circle never quite succeeded. Carlyle described Allen as 'earnest-frothy,' someone who took himself too seriously. He was also said to have thought Allen, 'lacking in perseverance'. His one-time friend had become in his eyes a social lightweight — definitely someone with whom it was wise not to be too closely associated.<sup>5</sup>

Allen was called worse — a fraud, a confidence trickster, a witch and an old devil — with good reason, after persuading Tennyson to invest large amounts in a company that went bankrupt.<sup>6</sup> And yet there were others who avowed that they owed their lives and their sanity to Matthew Allen. He was able, at very short notice, to obtain twenty-nine character references attesting to his honesty, and compassion. He was apparently not all puff — one neighbour wrote of his benevolence and continual attention to the wants and maladies of the poor in a very extensive neighbourhood, without any reward.<sup>7</sup> When first beginning work amongst the insane Allen wrote: 'You shall see me cheerfully shut myself up with Madmen, and sympathise with them, and seek for none for myself.'<sup>8</sup> True to his word, he lived and worked among the insane for the next twenty-five years along with his equally dedicated third wife.

Twentieth-century opinion seems to have followed Carlyle's. Allen has been variously called 'an irresponsible and rather amusing scoundrel', 'an inveterate liar', 'a womaniser' and one who 'feigned erudition'.<sup>9</sup> A superficial reading of his books would seem to confirm the latter opinion. His prose is flowery and unnecessarily complicated. His sentences sometimes stretch over two pages. His books are full

of references to other obscure works. It takes enormous concentration to follow his lines of thought and one sometimes wonders if it is worth the effort. Some of what he says — for example, his theories about the origins of cholera epidemics and his understanding of electro-magnetism — is erroneous; we know that now, one hundred and seventy years later. One is, however, struck by the consistent breadth of his reading in the midst of a busy life, and most of it newly published at the time. Many of his references are to European sources, which suggests he might have read French or German. One of Allen's better qualities was his open-mindedness and eagerness to understand and practice new approaches and ideas. As a child of the eighteenth-century, he was not bound by this inheritance. Throughout his life he made an effort to read and keep up with current theories. His insistence that there is 'a Universal Principle behind all things' appears questionable until one realises he was part of a line of thinkers, from the Greeks to the present day, who have pursued that chain of thought. So to say that he 'feigned erudition' is a hard term to use of him. His interests were widespread — theories of mind and of electricity, the most effective care of the insane or the best method of educating children — and his conclusions tended towards the unconventional. The advent of phrenology as a scientific and cultural phenomenon had an influence on Matthew's life, both personally and in his medical practice, as did the beginnings of another of the nineteenth-century's cultural traditions — the lecture circuit. This was built around the development of the Mechanics' Institutes and the Literary and Philosophical Societies. 'Eccentric' rather than 'feigned' seems to be a fairer term to use when describing his intellect.

Allen felt at home with other mild eccentrics, who took him seriously, men who displayed a similar kind of sophistication about their particular interests. Men, for example, like Basil Montagu, who as a barrister was concerned with the reform of the bankruptcy laws and, for pleasure, wrote sixteen volumes on the life and work of Lord Bacon, or Charles Augustus Tulk MP, gentleman of leisure, who spent the larger part of his life translating and publishing the works of Emmanuel Swedenborg. Carlyle wrote the following put-down about Montagu as he remembered him:

Basil Montagu [...] hugely a sage too, [...] continually preaching a superfine morality, about benevolence, munificence, health, peace, unfailing happiness, — much a bore to you by degrees, and considerably a humbug if you probed too strict [...] About sixty, good middle stature, face rather fine under its grizzled hair (brow very prominent); wore oftenest a kind of smile, not false or consciously so, but insignificant, and as if feebly defensive against the intrusions of a rude world.<sup>10</sup>

Carlyle was just as dismissive about Allen, calling him 'speculative, hopeful, earnest-frothy as from the beginning'.<sup>11</sup> Certainly Montagu and Allen seem to have given a similar outward impression to the world.

Allen's childhood was saturated with religious controversy, about events which took place twenty or more years before he was born, and his actions were restricted by the religious demands of Sandemanianism, an eighteenth-century Christian sect which is now extinct and in danger of being forgotten. Matthew's experiences of Sandemanianism add further to Geoffrey Cantor's work already published on the subject in *Michael Faraday: Sandemanian and Scientist*. Sandemanian attitudes and motives are obscure and peripheral to our modern thinking, their theology cold and uninspiring. Yet one has to make the effort to understand Sandemanianism in order to understand Allen. To know what made Matthew Allen what he was requires the appreciation that his unconventional family background is of more importance than in most other biographies. Also helpful for understanding Allen are the *Memoirs* of his oldest brother, Oswald, who was apprenticed to a York apothecary whose business he inherited. He rose to become one of the city's most eminent citizens — founder of the York Dispensary, a city Sheriff and several times on the board of governors of the York Asylum. Matthew was apprenticed to his brother in 1799 at the age of sixteen during which time a bitter and lifelong feud developed between them. Oswald's *Memoirs*, a five hundred-page manuscript, the original of which is in the York reference library, is a major, though often biased, source for this thesis.

Being an eccentric and at home with other eccentrics it was not a great step to being at home with the insane, and able to sympathise with and treat them. Here Allen found where his true gifts lay. He may have been a lightweight in the eyes of society, but was he also a lightweight when it came to the medical profession and to psychiatry? His medical training was inadequate and he got his qualification when degrees could be bought and academic requirements were few. He was, however, a pioneer when it came to treating mental illness, as this thesis will show. It will show too, something of the opinions his fellow doctors and alienists held about him. He was known by or had dealings with such men as Samuel Tuke, Sir William Ellis, Disney Alexander, George Birkbeck, George Mann Burrows, Alexander Morison and others.

From 1820 to 1845 legislative changes were made partially to alleviate suffering for the insane and a system of treatment was developed based on moral management. From 1845 a new era and approach began, based on total non-restraint. This required stricter management and higher staff levels. Treatment gradually moved away from what it had been during the previous twenty-five years. Whether what was done after 1845 was good or bad is not the subject of this thesis, but rather that the move away from the earlier era meant the loss of attitudes and treatment which were of value in dealing with the mentally ill. It

was these attitudes and treatment, which Allen so vigorously pioneered. This thesis attempts to highlight the value of Allen's work which history has tended to pass over in favour of the 'progress' that was made after 1845. It attempts to point out that because Allen's practice and that of his colleagues was early, this did not necessarily make it wholly inept or entirely outdated by what followed. It looks at what 'progress' left behind and suggests that Allen, among others, left a legacy that can inform us today and which we relegate to the archives of history to our loss.

But was he actually mentally unstable himself — a mad, mad-doctor? There were those who hinted that he was; his brother, his father, Thomas Carlyle, John Clare and Edward Fitzgerald amongst them. His own psychological history is as important to follow as those of his patients. His understanding and empathy with them gave him a unique insight into insanity and deeply affected his prescribed treatment.

References to Matthew Allen are like scattered shards of pottery. He is mentioned in the works of two poets, the unpublished memoirs of a Yorkshire surgeon and in the biographies of several famous men. Other evidences of his life and some of his letters are buried in archives relating mostly to other people and throughout the four books that he wrote himself, even in the midst of his work on chemical philosophy. The task when researching this thesis has been to fit together the pieces and establish the full story of Matthew Allen's life, with the object of revealing his true involvement in varied aspects of Victorian culture, and especially the nature and value of his pioneering work amongst the insane. As a first attempt at biography and with a desire not to omit any of the smaller pieces of evidence about Allen's life, but to gather together all the information available, I have written this thesis strictly chronologically. This task of establishing the facts, for example, whether Allen had been truthful in claiming to be the Superintendent/Apothecary at the York Asylum from 1819 to 1824, seemed to take priority over everything else. A thematic approach did not seem appropriate until the details of his life had been firmly established and accepted. Along with, confirming what he did and when, discovering the kind of man he was, has been a parallel strand of this thesis.

PART I

APPRENTICE AND STUDENT

# CHAPTER I

## ROOTS, RELIGION AND REBELLION

Jane Carlyle described Allen as, 'A Scotsman, who has a lunatic establishment in the midst of the forest'.<sup>1</sup> He was in fact a Yorkshireman and was born and brought up in Gayle, a small village, at the head of Wensleydale. The Dales were busier and more populated at that time than they are today. Lead mining and the knitting industry thrived around Hawes, the adjacent town to Gayle. The standard of living was low and the Allen family, who owned a number of fields and smallholdings in the area were better off than most.<sup>2</sup> The family could be traced back in the area for three centuries.

### 1.1 Matthew Allen's Family

James and Margaret Allen married in 1762 and had ten children born to them, only half of whom survived past young adulthood. Matthew Allen was the youngest and was born on 22 March 1783. He considered himself the son of his parents' old age. Though his older brothers and sisters had been disciplined within a strict religious upbringing he and his father acknowledged that he was spoilt and self-indulged. All the boys were educated at the Hawes village school that had been built by Matthew's paternal grandfather. There, they were given basic language and mathematical skills and learned Greek and Latin. Their life and culture centred on the chapel in the village and its ministry. The deeds for this building, which still exists today, though not as a place of worship, were bought by James Allen just before he married. Their religion and culture was completely male dominated. The future occupations of three out of four of James's sons were carefully planned. Oswald, the oldest was at fourteen to be apprenticed to a distant cousin, as an apothecary, in York. Francis Whaley had promised James Allen at his wedding to take on his oldest son and train him without apprenticeship fees. James kept him to his word. Though Whaley never complained he always resented Oswald's presence, taught him nothing himself and allowed him to be bullied by the older apprentice in the business. Edward, two years younger, than Oswald inherited property from his mother's family (the Wilsons of Newby, a village some twenty miles over the Yorkshire moors, south west of Gayle) and took on responsibility for his father's lands and remained in the dales as a full-time farmer. John, fourteen years younger than Oswald was in turn apprenticed to his eldest brother in York. Plans for Matthew, the difficult last child, were, as far as we know, never formulated.

Girls in the society were generally neglected and few ever moved beyond the immediate area in which they were born. We know very little about Matthew's two surviving sisters, Ann and Jane, who were educated at home by their mother. Jane married young to a local man of bad character and died aged forty-one. She was probably abused by her husband and abandoned while her four children were still dependent on her. Her brothers supported her. Ann, who lived with her widowed mother until the latter died in 1811, when Ann was thirty-four, probably didn't marry. Apart from reading their Bibles the women appear to have been almost illiterate. Margaret Allen never wrote any recorded letters to her three sons who lived in York for the last thirty years of her life. James Allen always wrote on her behalf. He himself had been taught in preparation for a Cambridge education.

James's father had brought up his son with the hope that he would become an Anglican clergyman. James had been a shy, over-serious boy at school. When he was bullied his father sent him to be taught privately by a clergyman, whose behaviour badly disillusioned his young pupil:

He received such a shock by the ways of the clergy as made him tremble at the thought of becoming a partaker in their iniquity, in making merchandise of holy things, living to themselves and not unto the Lord, serving themselves and not the flock committed to their care, instead of being examples in all holy conversation and purity.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, at the age of fourteen, he was sent to a small private school at Scorton near Richmond run by a Reverend Noble, a minister of finer qualities. A year later in 1749 James heard Benjamin Ingham preach. The latter had been a colleague of John and Charles Wesley at Oxford and had joined their mission to Georgia in America before returning to his native Yorkshire to preach, first within the Anglican communion, and later founding his own independent congregations throughout the Dales, Lancashire and Westmoreland. The young James Allen was converted under his ministry but it was three years before he was to meet Ingham again. In 1751 James Allen went up to St. John's College, Cambridge. It was while he was a student that he heard George Whitefield preach in London and first began to think favourably about independency within the church. However, James Allen did not complete his degree at Cambridge. While on a visit home, he once again came into contact with Benjamin Ingham who led him to change his mind about studying medicine at Edinburgh.<sup>4</sup> Instead in 1752 at the age of eighteen he joined Ingham as a fellow helper and preacher.<sup>5</sup>

There are several descriptions of James Allen as an enthusiastic and attractive young man which suggest something of what his youngest son Matthew may well have been like in manner and looks, though lacking his father's steadiness and lifelong consistency of character. William Batty, one of his neighbours in



the Dales, and also an Inghamite preacher, described James Allen in his journal: 'Mr Allen being young and prepossessing in his manners and possessed of shining abilities as a preacher and a person of good judgment, he attracted general esteem in the churches, and particularly amongst the younger people'.<sup>6</sup> Another account says of him: 'As a public speaker few excelled him; his language and manner were peculiarly impressive, his voice melodious and his affections much engaged when speaking of the grand things of the gospel. His deportment in life was uniformly exemplary, and becoming a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>7</sup> James Allen was caught up in the fire of the revival and for a decade worked tirelessly in the cause of the gospel, seeing success for his labours and that of his co-workers. He visited, taught and exhorted his far-flung congregations, travelling thousands of miles on horseback over the years.

## 1.2 The Inghamites and The Sandemanians

Charles Wesley responded positively to the Inghamite churches: 'She [Lady Margaret Hastings — Mrs Ingham — sister-in-law to the Countess of Huntingdon] wrote me that Mr Ingham's circuit takes in about four hundred miles. He has six fellow workers and several thousand people in his societies, most of them converted, I rejoice in his success.'<sup>8</sup> Small congregations grew up all over the Dales but they suffered from isolation from each other. Ingham was troubled with complaints from his congregations about lack of organisation within the religious society he had formed, and their lack of conformity in church structure. He wanted an organisation based on Biblical principles.

In 1760 Benjamin Ingham read a theological treatise written by Robert Sandeman, an unknown Scotsman, entitled *Letters on "Theron and Aspasia" Addressed to the Author of that work*. The author of *Theron and Aspasia* was John Hervey, one of a group of religious enthusiasts, who had been at Oxford with John and Charles Wesley in the 1730s.<sup>9</sup> On reading Sandeman's reply to Hervey, Ingham felt that it held the key to what he was looking for. At his own expense he sent James Allen and William Batty to visit Robert Sandeman and John Glas in Scotland to examine the structure of the church organisation that they had founded. The two men went and on their return made their report. Neither Ingham, Allen, Batty nor any other person involved in the controversy in the English Sandemanian Churches in the 1760s disagreed on doctrinal points. Their quarrel was then, as it was in future disputes, over church government — the laws and disciplines which affected the day-to-day running of church congregations. The aim of all was to be Biblical in these matters. However, the Glasites, as the sect was known in Scotland, having fixed on a rigid system, admitted no variation from it at any time and made no allowance for the varying strengths or

weaknesses of their members. They practised what became known as 'The Discipline'. It functioned to keep their membership pure, but resulted in keeping their numbers small and ultimately led to their own destruction. Breakaway congregations were formed over and over again throughout their history, disputes were rife, and 'The Discipline' was responsible for more trouble within their ranks than any other matter.

The elders, or presbytery, were responsible for the behaviour of the members and when anyone failed in their Christian conduct they were sanctioned by the presbytery and lost their membership until they were willing to confess and repent, after which they were then welcomed back into the church. If, however, they offended a second time they were excommunicated permanently. The most well known case of the Discipline occurred in the London congregation in the mid-nineteenth-century. The by-then-famous Michael Faraday, discoverer of electro-magnetism, and inventor of the modern application of electricity, who had been a member of the Sandemanian church all his adult life, temporarily lost his membership for being willingly absent from worship on a Sunday. His reason — he had been dining with the Queen at her invitation.<sup>10</sup>

Argument broke out among the Inghamites as to whether to follow Sandemanian principles or not. A conference was held at Thinoaks farm in 1761. All approved Sandeman's biblical organisational structure for the churches as an ideal to be reached over time. Ingham advised a slow and gradual introduction of the plan into the congregations, emphasising patience and forbearance.<sup>11</sup> To James Allen this was anathema. Having seen what was biblically correct he felt it important to instigate the practice of the truth immediately. His brothers-in-law, John Wilson and Robert Birkets, sided with Allen in the dispute.

This division of opinion prompted Allen to set about visiting as many congregations as he could to persuade them of the error into which he felt Ingham and some of the other leaders had fallen. The vast majority followed Allen, leaving Ingham with only about eight loyal congregations out of over seventy small groups. The dispute with Ingham was quite clear-cut and, to the regret of all involved, became permanent. Discussion about reunion proved useless and was soon dropped — each group went their own way and each now have their own history. What has been far less clear is what then happened between Allen and the Sandemanians.<sup>12</sup>

It was a matter of months after this that James married Margaret and established their home in Gayle and centred their life on the group of believers who met in the chapel building which James had just

acquired. He began at once, and with enthusiasm, to bring his people into line with Sandemanian principles. This was very much easier said than done. Over the next twenty years the Allen children were born into an atmosphere of religious tension and dispute. Their father suffered misunderstanding, injustice and calumny. He in turn was very voluble about the rightness of his cause. By the time Matthew Allen was born his father had been excommunicated from the very Christian body which he saw as the only true church of Christ on earth. He wrote: 'While the churches traduce me, I have the pleasure most cordially to agree with them in all the leading articles of their creed'.<sup>13</sup> For the next thirty years until his death James Allen endeavoured to achieve reconciliation with his Sandemanian brethren.

The Sandemanians had been established by a dissident Church of Scotland minister, John Glas, who initially broke away with a group of followers because they were at odds with the establishment of the church with the state. They built their first church building in Dundee. Glas wrote his beliefs in four volumes called *Testimony to the King of Martyrs*, a work of heavy theology. Sandeman's answer to Hervey's book, more easily read and understood, became the defining work of the movement. Their teaching, upon which the two men were completely agreed, was Calvinistic but extreme as regarded faith and salvation.<sup>14</sup> Glas had suffered the loss of his wife and all his children. His widowed son-in-law, Robert Sandeman, established a congregation in Perth and gradually took over the leadership of the whole movement. It was from him that the sect got its name. Glas became more and more inflexible and intolerant of those who did not obey his dictates. Riley sympathises: 'Poor Allen! There is not one word of Christian comfort in the correspondence (with Glas) which survives. Throughout there is an undercurrent of unrest'.<sup>15</sup> Allen had no dispute with Glas's doctrine but found endless difficulties in getting his congregations to conform to ecclesiastical practice, or church organisation and government, including the holding of Holy Communion. Glas refused to visit Yorkshire and see the local difficulties for himself. Impatience with Allen and his parochial problems, finally led him to brush the Yorkshire man aside, being 'determined from my part to correspond no more' and to concentrate on correspondence with the city congregations which had begun in London, Edinburgh, Nottingham and Newcastle.<sup>16</sup>

### **1.2.1 Sandemanianism And The Culture Of The Time**

To belong to the Sandemanian church required a whole way of life, which often came into conflict with the rest of the world. The church formed the greater part of the social and cultural environment of its membership. Attempt at biblical practice regulated day-to-day living. Emphasis was placed on temperance, modesty, Sabbath keeping, denying the use of oaths, sharing wealth, honouring

parents, widows and the elderly and assisting the sick and poor.<sup>17</sup> This led to a tendency to become exclusive, to deny the fads and fashions prevalent in secular society, to lose touch with the world and to make a general condemnation of its practices as sinful. There was a danger of developing a pharisaical attitude towards all who were not church members. To avoid this, there grew up from time to time an antinomian attitude amongst Sandemanians, which caused them to swing to the opposite extreme in their attitude towards secular activities.<sup>18</sup> There was a rather false attempt by some to mix very consciously in society. In his *Memoirs* Oswald Allen refers to instances of antinomianism in the Sandemanian church at York, and emphasises the necessary balance, to which Christians are called in the Scriptures, of holy living while participating in human affairs. There was the occasion on which elders, from the Sandemanian church in Nottingham, arrived in York on a Saturday to participate in the ordaining of deacons in the York church on the Sabbath day following. They made a point of taking members of the church with them to a race meeting and to the theatre. Oswald, in contrast, writes in favour of the exclusive society of the church as a sufficient cultural environment for Sandemanians:

[...]To the conformity to this world (save in their religious worship) it has been indulged to an extent highly incompatible with the self-denial enjoined upon the disciples of Jesus Christ. But many of those liberties I suppose originated in the idea that it with respect behoved them to mortify the Pharisee, thus to avoid one extreme they fall into the opposite one, bringing a reproach upon the Christian Profession. The life of a disciple of Jesus Christ is a life of self-denial to this world and all its lusts — [...] we have no need to visit a theatre or a race ground or peruse a novel — as incentive to our carnal appetites [...] Fellowship with the churches, is obtainable with good conscience [...] Christian fellowship keeps alive the Profession.<sup>19</sup>

He also presents a picture — the nearest he comes to humour in his *Memoirs* — of the absurdity of such a false attitude: He abhors, 'The practice of such an old man as J. J [...] pointedly going to a horse race or a play as if it constituted part of his religion, where I should apprehend, at his time of life, (he) can have no great enjoyment'.

Oswald Allen's view was the one that generally prevailed throughout the Sandemanian church and it is notable that as a prominent figure in secular society Michael Faraday stood by these principles. He rarely mixed in society. His religious beliefs strictly regulated all of his life and attitudes and made the church the centre of his activities and closest relationships, these being more important to him than even his pioneering work.

The Sandemanians usually kept out of the world, but there were occasions when the world tried to come into their church. Oswald Allen relates such an incident in his *Memoirs*.<sup>20</sup> In 1823, without his agreement, he was elected by the Mayor and Aldermen to be a Sheriff of the City of York. The first he

knew about it was when he was summoned to appear at the Guildhall to swear the oath of office, or be fined. A necessary qualification for the office of Sheriff was to be a communicant of the Church of England, which was thought by Sandemanians to be part of the anti-Christian Church. Oswald had several options: he could have sworn the oath despite being a Dissenter (it was urged upon him that two of the Sheriffs of London were Dissenters — and on a later occasion he did this), or he could have paid the fine and refused the office. He chose instead to take a public stand on the issue as a matter of conscience, relishing the opportunity to let his religious principles be widely known. While in dispute, the case was debated in the local press and was the chief gossip of the town. Oswald's lawyer hired a London barrister, Sir Richard Scarlett, and the case was taken to the Court of the King's Bench. Oswald's stand was supported by The Society for the Protection of Civil and Religious Liberty and he won his case.

For the followers of John Glas there could be no compromise with his original stand against a State Church and all that membership of it required in religious or secular society. Oswald Allen was not an exception to the rule and, had most other Sandemanians been brought into a compromising position, they would no doubt have taken the same stand.

### 1.2.2 'The Pike Affair'

James Allen had himself established a Sandemanian congregation in York. It was under the supervision of William Baldock an old and respected friend. Baldock visited London and attended the Sandemanian meeting house there, where at the time one, Samuel Pike, was an elder. Baldock returned to York much troubled by what he had learnt of Pike's behaviour.

Some years before, Pike had been minister of the Congregational chapel in Three Cranes Lane, Thames Street, in London. In the course of his studies he had become interested in the philosophical teachings of John Hutchinson (1647-1737) whose cosmology denied Newton's theory of gravitation and whose own theories were based on an interpretation of the original, unpointed, Hebrew script of the Old Testament.

In 1753 Pike wrote his own work *Philosophia Sacra*, based on Hutchinson's theories, which at the time, 'Created no small stir in the learned world'.<sup>21</sup> Two years later some members of his congregation asked him to comment on Robert Sandeman's book *Letters on "Theron and Aspasia" Addressed to its Author*. He read the work in which Sandeman clearly condemned Hutchinsonian Philosophy, 'on Doctrinal, Moral and Philosophical grounds'.<sup>22</sup> Pike began a correspondence with Sandeman in January 1758. This

correspondence is remarkable in that neither participant mentions Hutchinson. Sandeman obviously had not heard of Pike's renown as a philosopher and Pike, for obscure reasons of his own, chose to suppress his Hutchinsonian views. There is no evidence that Pike ever formally renounced these views, but only that he later deviously hid them from his fellow Sandemanians. There is no explanation for this. The DNB simply comments 'A curious reaction led him from the doctrines of Hutchinson [...] to those of Glas'.<sup>23</sup> Pike began to teach Sandemanian doctrine in his chapel and the members of his congregation who could not agree with these teachings left and formed another church elsewhere. Pike, and the residue of his congregation, joined the Sandemanians in their London meeting house in December 1765 and the following year he was ordained an elder.

In the quarrels that followed, Pike's exclusion from the church would undoubtedly have taken place on the grounds of his Hutchinsonian beliefs alone. But he was never challenged about the book he wrote, or the philosophical views he held. However, in such clear contrast to Glas's attitude to Allen after they had corresponded, Robert Sandeman, at the end of his last published letter to Pike (no. 8 in 1759), wrote:

Since I wrote the preliminary part of this long letter I have had the satisfaction of reading two sermons of yours lately published bearing for a common title "Saving grace, Sovereign grace", and it is with pleasure I find myself thereby compelled to add to the common address of civility that of affection [...] by these discourses you have stormed my heart and taken it [...] they incline me to forget that ever any dispute subsisted between us.<sup>24</sup>

### 1.2.3 The Yorkshire Offence

In what came to be known as 'The Yorkshire Offence', James Allen raised a formal complaint to the church in London, not about any of the above, but in connection with Pike's use of church money to extend and insure his own home in Hoxton Square, London, as reported to him by William Baldock. The matter was denied and the London church laid a complaint with Glas about Allen. Glas took sides with the London congregation, objecting to Allen's attack on Pike. Allen was excommunicated and no amount of remonstrance brought about his restoration.

He wrote in his *Memoirs*:

In October 1769 the York people renewed their correspondence with London concerning Mr Pike and in December following he was excommunicated for abusing his power in the Gospel through covetousness. Mr Pike confessed his sin in a letter to York, and Mr Barnard [i.e. John Barnard, founder and elder of the London meeting-house] made some concession for the evil treatment they had met with from London, but had no consciousness of the evil of those principles which had so long supported him in the office and in the church, nor of the evil treatment against me and others who had remonstrated against Mr Pike's covetousness and intemperance and the self-indulgence of

elders in general and the prevalence of human authority in the church of God. Mr Barnard said: "The act of the church could not justify Mr Allen's charge because he was a stranger to the Annuity scheme etc. which formed a capital part of their charge". Mr Pike had laid up year by year a part of his income for an annuity for Mrs Pike in the case she survived him and also, while living on the alms of others, was found laying up treasure for himself on earth.<sup>25</sup>

I well remember a letter from Mr Barnard wherein they acknowledged the injury done to the York people and at the same time take care to inform them that these acknowledgements do not extend to James Allen. For this reason I suppose, because in supporting my offence against Mr Pike I had taken no notice of his annuity scheme or the special use made of his spiritual merchandise in making such additions to his house in Hoxton as served to advance the yearly rents etc. The facts I mentioned were insufficient, in their view, to support the offence and proceeded from prejudice, pride, malice, pharasaism or, in one word, the filthiness of the spirit.<sup>26</sup>

He was permanently excluded from fellowship with Sandemanians for the rest of his days.

His family was deeply affected by their father's sorrow and frustration. His sons took the exclusion as a personal affront and in adulthood tried in vain to redeem their father's name. Even after James Allen's death in 1804 they longed for their father to be posthumously pardoned and restored to the church. 'The Pike Affair' became a vent for their anger, not only against the church, but also against each other. It even became used as a weapon within family disputes.

### 1.3 Problematic Family Dynamics

Matthew Allen was later to find the causes of mental illness within family relationships and the psychology of childhood. His own family and childhood experiences are therefore crucial in understanding his approach to insanity.

Infant mortality was high. Few large families escaped the death of a child altogether. The Allens seemed, however, to have suffered more than the usual share of tragedy, losing half their children. Neither James Allen, Oswald nor Matthew in their memoirs, letters nor writings (apart from information on family trees) record, let alone comment on, deaths within the family, prior to the incident which led to the death of Matthew's brother, John. Noticeably only one of the deaths was during infancy. The firstborn, a girl, died at four years old. Later came the death of two boys, one at seven and the other at eleven years of age. Fifteen years later the second oldest in the family, Elizabeth, died aged twenty-six. The resultant 'shape' of the family, disregarding the girls, was two brothers, Oswald and Edward with only two years between them and then an eleven year gap with two more brothers John and Matthew also with two years between them. Effectively they were divided into an older family and a younger family. Added to this, when Oswald left home at the age of fourteen John was barely a year old and Matthew was born more than a year later.

The two younger boys grew up hardly knowing their eldest brother who lived in York.

Oswald was without doubt their father's favourite, who till his dying day found very little fault in him. This was because Oswald was compliant by nature and bent on obliging his father in all he did. To his siblings he must have been very dull and was not particularly missed when he left home. James Allen wrote of his oldest son:

He was tractable and peaceable in the whole of his conduct; and no child ever gave less cause of pain and more pleasure and satisfaction to his parents. His disposition was naturally bashful and timid [...] He was a person unmeddling in the affairs of others; swift to hear and slow to speak; tho' very capable of judging and speaking with propriety. He was faithful and industrious, perhaps to an extreme; and so fearful of offence that he would almost suffer anything rather than complain; save to his parents, who were always his confidants, even to manhood.<sup>27</sup>

Oswald wrote of his own childhood, almost as if he had never known or had forgotten what it was like to be a child himself. He did in fact spend his most pleasurable hours with adults — his father and his father's friends:

My time was chiefly occupied by my attendance at the school in Hawes, and occasionally my leisure hours in the evening were engaged in receiving instruction from my father. [...] I had a peculiar pleasure in attending upon his preaching on the Sabbath, and also at other times in listening to the conversation of his religious friends; which pleasure I availed myself of as often as the opportunity occurred.<sup>28</sup>

Of brothers, sisters and friends of his own age he says nothing. James Allen had very different things to say about Matthew, the son of his old age, who, he said, as a boy had been 'giddy foolish, and unsteady'.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.3.1 Edward Who Remained In The Dales

This brother, two years younger than Oswald, remained as a farmer in the Dales and was also for many years an elder of the chapel in Gayle. The *Memoirs* of Oswald reveal him as a hard man whose quarrels with his older brother increased in quantity and intensity as he got older. In 1819 he, along with their cousin Oswald Allen of Scarrhead farm, near Gayle, who was also an elder in the chapel, attempted to exclude Oswald of York from the Gayle Chapel where Oswald had held membership since he was thirteen years old. A furious correspondence was taking place between them and their cousin and brother in York. Despite all pleas they remained implacable and apparently in harmony with each other. There is, however, a letter which reveals the true relationship of the cousins and chapel elders in Gayle. In the letter the congregation in Arbroath was seeking to constitute themselves as a church and wished to be included into fellowship with their brethren in Gayle. They had written explaining their practices and all in Gayle were happy to accept them except Edward Allen. Oswald of Scarrhead wrote back to Arbroath:



The Reason as far as I can understand why our brother and elder Edward Allen could not agree with us was his refusing the practice alluded to in yours respecting the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. He considers the view and practice a departure from the faith — error or heresy — notwithstanding I have seen no passages advanced by him to convince us, nor anything of weight on the subject to prove his own idea. I have wrote of and spoke my sentiments [...] as far as I am able from Scripture, but to no effect on his mind — still he appears hardened against present views. Every step I believe was taken by us all, every forbearance granted, but no forbearance could be had from him by any degree.<sup>30</sup>

Edward Allen is revealed here as harsh and bigoted to the point of unreason. Neither through the *Memoirs* nor other sources do we have any evidence of Edward and Matthew communicating with each other after Matthew left for York in 1799. Edward died in 1841.

### 1.3.2 Spendthrift And Miser

Money was a life-long problem for Matthew. He constantly misused it and was short of it. Using or contemplating the use of large sums seemed to tip the balance of his mind so that he became irresponsible, fanciful and highly excitable in his actions. He often took a cavalier attitude to other people's money and failed to see that carelessness with money inevitably led to allegations of dishonesty. His brother Oswald, by contrast, in a very short time rose from a poverty stricken apprentice to a gentleman of means. He was, however, tight-fisted, feared lest he mismanage his money and was unnecessarily anxious and mean. Both their personalities were deeply affected by their extreme attitudes to money.

They were children of a man with a large family and an uncertain income. James Allen would have had an annual income from certain agricultural land, which he farmed and rented out. His position as a pastor and preacher, which occupied the majority of his time, did not guarantee an income. He depended on the gifts of his parishioners. He had few committed members and the majority were very poor. He had to 'live by faith', trusting the God he served to supply his needs. This life of faith would have been the example he set his children. They would have been expected to pray for what they needed. At the same time they would have had urged upon them the injunctions of hard work and frugal living. Matthew Allen had the language which often went with this kind of attitude. In 1842 he was to write to the poet Tennyson whom he had persuaded to invest a large amount of money in a wood carving business: 'Have faith and all things will be more than well.' Tennyson's memory of Allen many years after the latter's death echoed those same words:

"Have faith, have faith! We live by faith," said he,  
 "And all things work together for the good  
 Of those-" It makes me sick to quote him — <sup>31</sup>

It is a possibility that Oswald and Matthew had seldom handled money before they left Gayle or if

they had, only in very small amounts. It was not until they were adults that they had any responsibility for it, or had need for it in any quantity.<sup>32</sup> This would, in part, account for Matthew's gullibility, anxiety and foolishness in business dealings throughout his life, and his giving way to a childish excitement and/or lack of confidence when he was required to handle money. It was particularly difficult for him when money stood as an issue between him and another as was the case with Tennyson. It seems in adulthood handling money gave him a buzz much like that experienced by a gambler, that he could not hold onto it for long and sooner or later let it run through his fingers.

### 1.4 Matthew's Apprenticeship

Matthew went to York in 1799 at the age of sixteen to be apprenticed as an apothecary to Oswald. Oswald himself had been through a seven-year apprenticeship, during which he had endured hardship and loneliness, but had succeeded due, in part, to his mild and obedient temperament. Apart from Matthew being made of more fiery and unsteady stuff, the circumstances under which he came to York did not give him a good start. In 1798 John, his brother, had come to York at the age of eighteen as an apprentice to his eldest brother. He and Matthew would have been close in childhood, sharing their schooldays and other aspects of their boyhood.

#### **1.4.1 The Death Of His Brother John**

According to Oswald, John was a delicate, quiet boy who never gave him a day's trouble, fitted into the family life in York, and worked hard at learning his trade. Though Oswald does admit to some neglect in his training due to pressure of his own responsibilities, he was fond of him and looked forward to their being partners in the future. Matters continued peacefully for a year until John went home for a holiday in Wensleydale. Over the years the men in the Allen family had frequently travelled the road from Gayle to York on horseback and they had their regular overnight stopping places. For a reason never made clear, John attempted to return to York in one day. He was thrown from his exhausted horse, but apparently unhurt, he told no one what had happened. Some days after his return he fell ill. At first little concern was shown but when his condition deteriorated, and John confessed to the fall, Oswald called in a colleague for advice and sent for his parents. By the time they arrived John was unconscious and died within a few hours. He appears to have died from what today would be called delayed concussion.<sup>33</sup>

About a year later, when Oswald returned to York from a visit home, he brought Matthew with

him to take John's place. He had high hopes that this youngest child of the family would prove equally as compliant:

I brought back with me my youngest Brother, Matthew — a pleasing looking youth of sixteen years of age for the purpose of educating him and bringing him up in my profession; in short adopting him as a son, and proposed to myself much future comforts in him, by supplying the place of my late much lamented brother, John. [...] But those flattering hopes were soon blasted.<sup>34</sup>

For two years all went well and James Allen expressed pride and pleasure in his two sons in York. Then Matthew fell ill with typhoid fever and came very close to death. Oswald called in his brother-in-law, Dr Thomas Withers, to care for Matthew and the latter treated him in his own home. Matthew, who had been hiding fears about his brother John's death, became terrified that he too would die from what he saw as neglect on Oswald's part. Once recovered he rebelled, lost interest in his work, complained about his treatment in Oswald's home and suddenly announced that he had become a member of the Sandemanian church, accusing Oswald and his father of self-righteousness and hardness of heart.

Barnet in her article about Matthew, based on her reading of *Oswald Allen's Memoirs*, speaks of him as finding 'unsuitable friends'.<sup>35</sup> However, it seems she is taking Oswald's words too literally for according to what he wrote, at no time did Matthew show any propensity for worldliness, drinking or misbehaviour. He retained the religious fervour of his family, but the company he kept was amongst the Sandemanians, and they were only 'unsuitable' in his family's eyes. The Sandemanians had prejudiced Matthew against his own family. Always eager to hurt their erstwhile, unrepentant member, they had fed his son stories about his father and brother and related to him their own version of the 'Pike affair'. In July 1802 Oswald wrote to his brother Edward in Gayle:

I intimated the dissatisfactory nature of Matthew's conduct [...] his mind has got strongly biased in favour with the people here in connection with the Sandemanian churches [...] I was greatly hurt to find him so settled and determined in his own conception of things, as to set at naught every argument advanced in the way of proving the justice of my Father's offence in Mr Pike's affairs and his unjust expulsion on that account.<sup>36</sup>

Three months later, in a long communication to Matthew, Oswald wrote: 'You seem to have made up your mind on many subjects in an instantaneous manner, apparently relinquishing your own judgments and conscience, committing them into the hands of your friends, thus making them as the rule of your faith and practise.'<sup>37</sup> There followed a long period of disharmony in Oswald's home and rebelliousness from his pupil to whom he said: 'Your example as an Apprentice has been and still continues of a dangerous tendency to the order and regularity of my house.'<sup>38</sup>

How well was Matthew's medical education progressing in all this turmoil? Oswald makes his opinion clear: 'You seem to have no idea of furnishing your mind with Medical knowledge [...] You have now been upward of three years in an apothecary's surgery and I cannot find that you have ever once seriously begun to peruse a Medical book or manifested much partiality towards the profession. Consequently your medical knowledge must be very defective'.<sup>39</sup> Was this just a view of an angry brother? Given his later desire to study this seems out of character with Matthew. Surely, as master, Oswald should have known the state of his apprentice's knowledge? James Allen wrote letters pleading with Matthew and finally visited him in York. Oswald railed at his brother for the pain he was causing his now ageing father:

The churches with whom you have so lately connected yourself have not yet been able to point out wherein your Father has been corrupting the word of God, or departing from the faith, either in his public profession or in practice [...] how you could in conscience hold your Father in that light, who has heard his preaching and observed his manner of life from your childhood [...] This is a part of your conduct, tho' in perfect unison with your whole proceedings, that excites my natural feelings to a degree of detestation. For I could more readily pass over the unkindness and ingratitude which I have experienced from you, because I conceive your revolting temper capable of such conduct, than I can the disrespect and irreverence with which you have treated your parents.<sup>40</sup>

At this time Matthew enlightened Oswald on how John had really felt about living and working with him in York. John, it seems, had shared his feelings with Matthew while on his final visit home. Both brothers viewed Oswald more like a father figure. They had never viewed him with fraternal feelings and John had found him to be distant, cold and someone with whom he was unable to communicate. Oswald wrote to his brother with his reaction to these criticisms, seeming only half-convinced that his attitude had anything to do with the tragedy of John's death:

I have long suspected that what at first operated in your mind in the way of affecting your late change in your religious profession was a [...] dislike and disaffection towards me as your Brother, and your subsequent conduct has affirmed me in that opinion [...] Your insinuations respecting the treatment of my late beloved and esteemed brother John I (find) unjust [...] and unfeeling for if I have any cause of self-condemnation upon the subject it does not arise from any want of affection towards him [...] but it arises from the idea of his close confinement to business, a circumstance which originated in his own choice. If my natural reserve was too much restraint upon him, and prevented communications which might have contributed to his relief I shall ever regret it.<sup>41</sup>

#### **1.4.2 Attitudes To Marriage In The Allen Family**

In his New Testament notes on I Corinthians 7: 32, concerning marriage, James Allen wrote: 'Marriage is accompanied by trouble in the flesh, interruption in the service of God and worldly care and solicitude. Nevertheless it is better to marry than to burn.'<sup>42</sup> There was no obligation within the Sandemanian church for a man to marry a member of the church. Presumably it was assumed that a wife would submit to her husband's religion, no matter what her own background. In part of a letter to James

Allen on 12 July 1862, John Glas wrote: 'As the New Testament forbids not the marriage of a professor with an unbeliever we dare not forbid it, however great the disadvantages may be.'<sup>43</sup>

There is a copy of a letter in Oswald's *Memoirs* from his father, regarding the choosing of a wife. James writes that, a man having decided on the woman he wished to marry, should then approach her family and, if they approved, she should then be told of the matter and be expected to comply with the arrangement.<sup>44</sup> Oswald followed this pattern when he married Frances Withers. He sought her brother's agreement first before proposing marriage to her or making any hint of his intentions. The biblical teaching of a wife's submission to her husband was taken literally and applied with vigour by the Allens. Oswald's marriage was seriously jeopardised when decisions about the religious education of their only child, Frances, had to be made. He had carelessly promised his wife's family before their marriage that if they had a daughter she should be brought up by her mother in the Church of England. His wife being twenty years his senior and in her late forties it was not thought by him that they would ever have any children. Seeing the Established Church as definitely anti-Christian, when the matter became a reality, he argued that scriptural authority took precedence over his hastily given promise, and insisted that his daughter's religious education be left to him. His wife actually suggested that they separate, when, for a time, no compromise seemed possible. Frances, deeply influenced by her mother in this matter, ultimately followed her husband's affiliation to the Church of England and brought up all her children in his faith. Oswald was always very unhappy about this and in his turn tried to influence his oldest grandson, Oswald Allen Moore, who inherited his medical practice, against the established church — often taking him to worship in an independent non-conformist church when he visited his grandfather in York.

Medical historians Richard Hunter and Ida Macalpine have noted that Matthew Allen was the first alienist to suggest that the roots of insanity often lay in marriage relationships or domestic problems.<sup>45</sup> Allen made some important observations on marriage in his *Essay on the Classification of the Insane* written in 1837. His views would not only have been influenced by observation of insane patients but also by his own experience — his parent's relationship as seen by himself, their beliefs about marriage as stated above, and the experience of his own three marriages. 'The sword may slay its thousands,' he wrote, 'but the demon of domestic strife is much more destructive to man's life, health and peace.'<sup>46</sup> He described married couples developing a cycle of extreme behaviour which swung between anger and affection, their conduct and example often causing their children to develop the same state of mind. He saw in this a pattern, which could eventually lead to insanity in parents or children.<sup>47</sup> Matthew's own first two marriages

were far from satisfactory and it is possible that something of this pattern had existed between himself and his wives.<sup>48</sup>

Matthew was married three times, first to a relative on his mother's side of the family, Mary Wilson. This was in 1803 when he was only twenty and still apprenticed to his brother. They had a daughter who died within a few hours of her birth. Mary then died in 1806 of brain fever, according to Oswald's *Memoirs*. Matthew married a second time in 1810 or 1811 after his period of study in London and before he returned to Edinburgh. His second wife was Mary Snape whom he had originally met in Chester. They had three children, Matthew Oswald, born c.1811, Mary Ann born c.1812 and Thomas born in April 1816. A year later in April 1817 Matthew's second wife died, again according to Oswald, as a result of complications after the birth of their last child, Thomas. However, Matthew writes as if it was due to a sudden illness, though he does not state the nature of her complaint and indicates that her death was very unexpected. His third marriage took place c.1829 after he had founded his own asylum. His wife's name was Elizabeth Blane Paterson. We know that she was about twenty years younger than he was and of Scottish birth, though no evidence exists as to how and where they met. She seemed to be of a much stronger character than his former wives and was much admired by Allen's colleagues and by their patients and was obviously a great asset to his work. They had seven children. (See family tree, p.vii) Elizabeth continued the work of the asylum after Matthew died in 1845 until it was closed. Their eldest son Paterson became superintendent of High Beech asylum after he qualified as a MRCS c.1851. No further research has been undertaken as to what became of Elizabeth or her children after 1859.

### **1.4.3 Matthew's First Marriage**

In the midst of the family wrangling Oswald was astounded to receive a letter from a Sandemanian acquaintance, written on behalf of his brother Matthew. It requested that he be given time off from his duties so that he may go to Nottingham or London, where there were fairly large Sandemanian communities, to seek for a suitable woman among them, to be his wife. Oswald was hurt that his brother had not approached him directly. It is apparent that Matthew felt intimidated by his brother, sixteen years his senior. His request was not granted but, instead, the matter was referred to James Allen. He was not opposed to the idea, feeling that marriage might arouse a sense of responsibility in his rebellious son and settle him. He suggested that Matthew should go home to Gayle and choose his helpmate from amongst the community there whom he knew. Matthew forestalled further objections by returning home via Leck, a mile or two from Cowan Bridge, where John Wilson and family, relatives of his mother, lived. Matthew

had been corresponding with their daughter for some time and by the time he reached his own home all the marriage plans had already been completed.

Oswald favoured a long courtship for Matthew and Mary Wilson. This resulted in an unusually pleasant and co-operative letter from Matthew hoping to change his brother's mind. It was full of hopes for a better relationship in the future, but contained no apologies or repentance for the past, and Matthew again acknowledged that he was afraid to speak face to face with Oswald:

I would not address you in writing, could I divest myself of all these, I hope, quite unnecessary apprehensions, which I have so long been labouring under to do it face to face. Why all these fears? But that the contrast my disposition bears to yours, hath by degrees produced so much unavoidable trouble and uneasiness to you, as well as the utmost disadvantage to myself.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, he made a plea that a wedding date be set for sooner rather than later.

Matthew and Mary married on 7 September 1803 when he was twenty. Oswald rented a cottage for them on Peaseholme Green in York, little more than a stone's throw away from his own home in Colliergate, and agreed to pay them forty pounds a year in lieu of the board and lodging that he had been giving Matthew as his apprentice. Dr Thomas Withers, Oswald's brother-in-law, showed interest in the welfare of the newly-weds and visited them from time to time. Later he told Oswald that Matthew had tried to influence him against his brother.<sup>50</sup> Withers himself sometimes found Oswald pompous and exasperating and would have had some sympathy with Matthew's rebellious attitude. He must have seen that the brothers would never get on.<sup>51</sup> He warned Oswald not to invite Matthew back to York again once he had left, but later showed his concern for the younger Allen by leaving him five hundred pounds in his will.

It was just over a year after the marriage that Oswald and Matthew were summoned to their Father's deathbed in Gayle. James Allen died peacefully aged seventy, in November 1804. Death had visited Matthew earlier in that year when he and Mary had lost their first child when it was only a few hours old.<sup>52</sup> In two years the young mother was also to die of a brain fever. By that time Matthew's apprenticeship was over. He was free to leave York and went at the first opportunity. Although he was to live and work in York again, Matthew never felt free of his brother's oppressive presence while in that city.

### 1.5 The Irrevocable Rift with Oswald

Both brothers acknowledged their immense personality differences and always had a mutual dislike of each other, though Oswald attempted to put this dislike aside and foster fraternal feelings. 'Heaping coals of fire upon his brother's head', he helped Matthew in practical and financial matters, giving him many hundreds of pounds over the years. Matthew was ungrateful, critical and demanding, making no effort to be pleasant. Whether he eventually paid back his debts to Oswald is unclear. In 1824, when Matthew moved to the south of England, Oswald objected to Matthew's treatment of a letter he had sent to him and demanded an apology, which he never got. The two parted; all correspondence ceased between them and they never saw one another again.

Oswald became a wealthy man at a young age; he inherited a fair amount, but worked hard and was extremely frugal. Matthew viewed him as tight-fisted in the extreme but was himself careless, unwise and a spendthrift. He never hesitated to squeeze Oswald for every penny he could get out of him, feeling no conscience about it. He saw him as belonging to an older generation, austere, withdrawn, without humour or merriment, and incapable of understanding the passions and desires of youth. In this he certainly had a point. Matthew had had a flirtation with a servant girl in Oswald's house. Older brother and father were aghast when Matthew excused such behaviour by saying that he was driven to the servants' quarters for company as Oswald was so cold and withdrawn.<sup>53</sup>

There is no doubt that from start to finish Matthew, though rebellious, was also over-awed by this brother whom, as a child, he in reality knew only by reputation — the perfect son of an adoring father who spoke and did all that was right — who succeeded, without complaining, in all that he did, while he made his name and his fortune by serving the grateful public, and the suffering poor of York. Later Matthew was to accuse Oswald, quite without grounds it would seem, of deception and dishonesty in the charitable work he organised in the city.

### 1.6 Hints of Instability

Apart from the unending quarrel about the Sandemanians and the clash of personalities, Matthew also appears to have suffered from psychological instability. His father described his difficult behaviour in childhood: 'From your youth we saw and lamented the unsteadiness of your mind, and the vehemence of your temper rebounding against admonition and reproof.'<sup>54</sup> Again in January 1803, when Matthew was



twenty, he said of him: 'Your letters are so wild, that a stranger might think that they were the product of mental derangement thro' fever or otherwise.'<sup>55</sup> On later occasions others were to use similar phrases to describe Matthew.<sup>56</sup>

His letters, written during his apprenticeship, all displayed the same tendency to self-pity. He said little in defence of his actions but instead complained that he was not wanted, was seen as a nuisance, and was a victim of his family's harsh and self-righteous attitude. Given assurance again and again that his family loved him he was unable to accept and believe this. To Oswald he wrote:

Before my Father went he gravely told me, that 'He was very sorry he had not given his consent for your proposing to him to turn me out of your service'. I am warranted to infer that I am in that service to the sad mortification of both you and my Father.

Oswald replied:

What my Father said was, with the strongest feelings of parental affection, that, 'Let his conduct or provocations be ever so trying, bear with him and retain him, for his own sake and parent's sakes'. My reply was in the affirmative.<sup>57</sup>

Matthew suffered from a sense of inferiority and what today would have been seen as marks of clinical depression. Though he seemed to climb out of this depression not long afterwards, his problems — his anger with his brother and what he saw as his father's injustice as well as his own inability to please — remained buried and unresolved. It was an unpromising start for one who was one day to have the care and responsibility for several dozen insane patients. The rights and the wrongs of the Allen family relationships will never be proven one way or another, but what is sure is that the negative way Matthew perceived them had a deep affect on his life and led him to seek there, and in similar domestic situations, for the causes of his own instability and that of others. His writings show that Matthew never mellowed in his attitude, always retaining the view that his family had first spoilt him and then persecuted him. With a more stable personality his achievements might have been greater, but perhaps his compassion would have been less. As it was, it boded well for those who, when suffering delusions of persecution themselves, would seek a sympathetic and understanding friend in Dr Matthew Allen.

He who did so much to help the insane was beset with his own mental instability all his life. In 1817, under the stress of imprisonment, bankruptcy, and bereavement, his deep depression returned for a time. When he later met others who put their confidence in him and when he made a good marriage with his third wife he remained stable for many years. Bankruptcy for a second time and the failure to maintain the confidence of others, his patients and his peers, led to his final breakdown.

## CHAPTER II

### MEDICAL STUDENT, CHEMICAL PHILOSOPHER

#### 2.1 Uncertain Beginnings

When he had completed his apprenticeship Matthew had two aims — to attempt to clear his father's name among fellow Sandemanians and to study further towards a medical degree. In order to do the latter he knew he needed financial support and he hoped to raise this from among his religious brethren. He was willing to preach in the churches and in this way did gain some help towards his studies. Oswald remained excommunicated from the Sandemianians and longed for reconciliation, which never took place. Matthew, though at odds with the Edinburgh church, remained in communion with other Sandemianians at least until 1810. After this he seems to have left them of his own accord. His attempts to clear his father's name and have him posthumously pardoned and reinstated into their fellowship came to nothing. To some extent Matthew blamed Oswald's tactless interventions for this failure.

During the years 1807 to 1808 Matthew remained centred in York, living once again in his brother's house in Colliergate but from time to time visiting Sandemanian churches across the north of England. Oswald tells us that: 'He appeared like an individual liberated from restraint. For I heard of his visiting Liverpool and Chester and other places and I believe appeared in the churches in some places as a public preacher'.<sup>1</sup>

##### **2.1.1 Liverpool**

The church in Liverpool was one of the smaller, and more isolated of the Sandemanian congregations. They were, no doubt, glad of the services of an enthusiastic young man, but could have given him little material support. Information about this group of people is now very scarce. A description from 1891 describes the earlier chapel that Matthew would have visited in 1807 and the later one that Oswald visited on a Sabbath morning in 1823 during an extensive tour that he took after the death of his wife and sixteen years after his brother had visited Liverpool.<sup>2</sup> We know that by this time the congregation had split into two, one group calling themselves the Sandemanian Baptists. Oswald obviously did not hold the group in very high esteem and strove to retain his anonymity.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from preaching during that visit to Liverpool in 1807 Matthew, in his book *Essay on the Classification of the Insane* tells of another interest he had at that time: 'As early as 1807 I visited Lunatic asylums "con amore"'.<sup>4</sup> He says nothing of where he visited. He knew the Tukes and the two asylums in York, but could have visited there at anytime during his apprenticeship. The significance of the date he gives seems to indicate that his interest developed after he left York. Few public asylums were open outside of London at that date, an exception being the Liverpool Asylum which was opened in 1792.

### 2.1.2 Chester

In 1807 or 1808 Matthew Allen crossed the Mersey and visited Chester. It is possible that members of the Liverpool Sandemanian Church lived in the area. He had two significant meetings while there; both alluded to by Oswald. Firstly, 'I understood he (Matthew) received a remittance from Mr Fawcett of Chester.'<sup>5</sup> Here at least was some success. Who was this man who put his confidence in Matthew Allen? He is mentioned on only one other occasion in a footnote to one of Matthew's essays *On Chemical Philosophy* published in *The Philosophical Magazine (1819)*, where Matthew refers to the correspondence he had with Dr Fawcett of Chester in 1806. (See p 42).

As this man appears to have had an influence on Allen some effort has been made to discover who he was. The relevant archives hold nothing conclusive but the following hypothesis can be drawn. A Reverend Richard Fawcett from Hardrow, near Hawes in Wensleydale, had been schoolmaster of the school in Hawes in the 1750s. (Before the arrival of the Inghamites to the area.) It seems that this man, a minister of the Church of England, was possibly a relative of the Allen family. The Fawcetts appear on the Allen family tree. Two generations later (c.1804) there was a Reverend Stephen Glas Fawcett in Chester who might have been Richard Fawcett's grandson. Though a Church of England minister for a time he does not appear to have been ordained but by 1809 he had become the director of the *Classical and Scientific Institution* in Chester — a rather grand name for a boys' private school. He claimed amongst other, apparently spurious, qualifications to have a doctorate in literature. He seems to have been a self-styled, perhaps bogus, man of learning to whom Allen was attracted and may even have attempted to emulate.

Oswald's *Memoirs* tell of the second important meeting that Matthew had in Chester: 'It was during this excursion that he became acquainted with the family with whom he afterwards became connected by marriage.'<sup>6</sup> How Matthew came to meet this family we do not know, but in 1810 or 1811 he

married Mary Snape of Chester. Mary's parents and sisters lived in Wigan. When she met Matthew she must have been staying with either an uncle or a brother. The Chester City Voting Lists for 1812 to 1818 record the name of '*James Snape, Brewer, Barrel Well Brewery, Boughton.*' That her connection was with this particular family of brewers seems fairly certain, for on his tour in 1823 Oswald wrote: 'We returned to Chester for dinner after which I called upon Mrs Snape at the Brewery and drank tea with the family' <sup>7</sup>

After his sojourn in Liverpool and Chester Matthew went on to Edinburgh for the first time, apparently to attempt the reconciliation of his family with the Sandemianians while also making a start on his medical studies. In the *Memoirs* we read that he neglected his studies while engaged in religious controversy with the Sandemianians — this was entirely Oswald's view on the matter for, while at Matthew's request he sent him all the papers and correspondence on the Pike affair, Oswald never found out what happened. He wrote that there never seemed to be any progress or conclusion reached in the matter. <sup>8</sup> Maybe Matthew did more study than his brother realised or was willing to admit. Oswald inclined in his *Memoirs* to ignore or discredit or even to over-ride his brother's efforts to educate himself further. Oswald complains of Matthew's bad business practice, his carelessness with money, his hopeless attempts to support a family, all of which was painfully obvious. He, however, never put his brother's struggles and failures into the context of a man who was spending every waking hour attempting to gain a medical degree. Instead he complained:

I shall ever lament that you did not from the beginning pursue the line that was always intended for you to pursue [presumably to remain in partnership with Oswald in York]; but you never liked drudgery, nor steady application, and unfortunately for yourself and your connections, the high conceit of your own talents has been most ruinous to your welfare <sup>9</sup>

He scorns Matthew for attempting to act above his station, but it might well have been that Oswald was jealous of his youngest brother for achieving, what he himself had always wanted to do, had circumstances allowed it. <sup>10</sup>

## 2.2 Student 1809-16

### **2.2.1 Student Life In Edinburgh In The Early Nineteenth-Century**

To neglect Matthew's academic struggle and examine only the biographical details given in Oswald's *Memoirs* would achieve a one-sided picture. An examination into the general life of a medical student in Edinburgh gives an idea of the social and academic atmosphere in which Matthew would have mixed. Lockhart, the novelist and son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott, wrote a vivid description of student life

in Edinburgh in 1819, here summarised by Horn, which provides an excellent context in which to see Allen's experience of a few years earlier.

Students did not wear gowns nor live 'within the walls of the colleges', they just went once or twice a day to listen to a lecture. They came up too young with little Latin [...] Lockhart then referred to 'the slovenly and dirty mass' of students 'with its contaminating atmosphere' within the classroom. Whereas in England the father of a family seldom thought of sending his son to college unless he could afford to give him an allowance of some three hundred pounds per annum in Scotland 'any young man who can afford to wear a decent coat and live in a garret upon porridge and herrings, may, if he pleases come to Edinburgh and pass through his academical career just as creditably as is expected or required' on thirty pounds or even much less a year. The Edinburgh style of education made the Edinburgh student a keen doubter and debater but offered him little prospect of 'any great increase in worldly goods' or 'any very valuable stronghold of peaceful meditation.' Indeed at the end of the day, he might find himself, if not a burden to his relations, at least filling a post for which so expensive a preparation was unnecessary.<sup>11</sup>

Though Horn takes pains to compare the cheaper lifestyle a student could sustain in Edinburgh compared with the demands of life at the English universities, nevertheless it seems that in Edinburgh there were still constant demands made on the student's pocket, which Matthew Allen, supporting himself, would have, in the best of circumstances, found difficulty in fulfilling. Though students were apparently able to survive on a very moderate income, Allen would have found it difficult to curb his spending, surrounded as he was on every hand with new interests and opportunities, and with his experience to this point in his life limited to Wensleydale and York. Later, married and with a family, he was strained to the limit financially.

In 1822 Alexander Bower wrote a handbook for potential students explaining the process involved in matriculating at the commencement of each new academic year. The process for Matthew Allen and the fees due, would have been very similar:

When a student matriculates in the University of Edinburgh he enrolls his name in the register of the university [...] is admitted one of its members and is acknowledged as a son of Alma Mater Edinensis [...] no subscription to any article of religion nor confession of faith are required [...] The Secretary's business is to superintend the registration of the names of the students; [...] one of his deputies [...] attends in the Library to receive the subscriptions of the students [...] he (the student) contributes ten shillings to the Library [...] he obtains a Matriculation ticket before he can obtain a ticket from any Professor to attend his lectures; and it is expected that when he makes application to a Professor in private in order to fee him, that he shall carry the Library ticket along with him.<sup>12</sup>

Edinburgh University records show that Matthew matriculated for the academic year 1807-08 and again for the following year 1808-09. Previous to the commencement of each session a list of the classes with their hours and stated preliminary regulations was issued by the Secretary and hung in the university library. The winter session for the medical school in 1822 was as follows.<sup>13</sup>

Dietetic, Materia Medica, Pharmacy	Weds. 8 o'clock 30 October	Dr Duncan
Practice of Physic	Weds. 9 o'clock 30 October	Dr Home
Chemistry and Chemical Pharmacy	Weds 10 o'clock 30 October	Dr Hope
Theory of Physic	Weds. 11 o'clock 30 October	Dr Duncan
Anatomy and Pathology	Weds. 1 o'clock 30 October	Dr Munro
Principles and Practise of Surgery	Weds. 4 o'clock 13 November	Dr Munro
Theory and Practice of Midwifery	Tues 3 o'clock 12 November	Dr Hamilton
Clinical Medicine	Tues. 4 o'clock 12 November Tues. & Fri	Dr Duncan Dr Home jnr
Clinical Surgery	Mon. 5 o'clock 4 November	Mr Russell
Royal Infirmary at Noon daily — Practical Anatomy under the Superintendence of Dr Munro.		

The demands of this schedule are obvious. As each lecturer worked at his own address in Edinburgh, for a student to move from lecture to lecture without losing time or being late was well nigh impossible. The fees for each subject were four guineas for a first course, three guineas for a second and two for a third. Royal Infirmary fees were five pounds seven shillings. Besides this five shillings was paid to the doorkeeper at each class. The fees for private lecturers who gave evening classes were three guineas for the first and two for the second course and probably no doorkeeper's fee.

In September 1808, before the start of his second academic year which commenced in November, Oswald wrote to Matthew requesting him to stand in as his locum in his practice in York while he was away on an extended business trip to London. Naturally enough Matthew initially refused as he was committed to the course of study — Oswald did not seem to take this into account at all. When, however, Oswald planned his return from London before or by November, Matthew apparently changed his mind and arrived in York, without warning, to help his brother out. Oswald gives the reason for this change of mind as Matthew's involvement in religious disputes. It was much more likely that Matthew had run out of money — this being a constant problem for him — and that having paid the expenses of matriculation he was unable to afford the lecturers' fees. Oswald's *Memoirs* tell us:

In the beginning of the month of September, 1808 [...] my Mother and her grandson, J Allen, came to York to my house to remain with my dear wife during my absence from home, and also my Brother Matthew from Edinburgh to officiate for me during my absence. Having made every necessary arrangement for my journey I left York on the 28 September for London.<sup>14</sup>

Oswald had intended to return from London after a month so that Matthew could return to Edinburgh in time for the new university session, he let him down badly, only returning to York on 18 January 1809. Matthew felt bullied and misled by Oswald and resentful at what he considered his affluent brother's meanness. Matthew's chances for continuing his study in Edinburgh for that year were ruined. Maybe at Oswald's suggestion, he decided to continue his medical studies in London. Two years later, Oswald defended himself against Matthew's accusations in a letter dated 23 January 1812: 'I know of no compulsion exercised to induce you to leave York for London from any quarter whatever; your determination originating with yourself. And when I found that the case, I advised you not to delay lest you might lose the commencement of the course of lectures as you had done in Edinburgh.' He notes that almost immediately Matthew set out for London: 'For the purpose of prosecuting his medical studies.'<sup>15</sup>

### 2.2.2 Matthew's Year In London

The medical lectures, which Matthew attended, would have been given at one of London's teaching hospitals, as it was still two decades before University College began training medical students. Oswald's *Memoirs* give an indication as to what these lectures might have been and how Matthew might have supported himself for the year or more that he spent in London. Much later, in 1829, in Oswald's detailed account of a long visit that he made with his daughter to the capital city, he twice mentions visiting *Plough Court*.

No.1 Plough Court, off Lombard Street in the City, was the premises of W. Allen, Druggist. The chemist, William Allen, was not a blood relation to the Allen's of Yorkshire.<sup>16</sup> His family were well known Quakers from the south of England. Oswald's acquaintance with him would have been professional; probably through his wholesale buying of chemicals from the London firm. No doubt their active religious faiths would also have drawn them together. William Allen, who became a member of the Royal Society in 1807, is best remembered for the series of lectures in Chemistry that he regularly gave at Guy's Hospital during the first two decades of the nineteenth-century. He was active too in other ways. In 1810 he started a journal called *The Philanthropist*. Had he had sole management of his business he would have been unable to achieve so much in other fields. He needed help in order to set him free for the many outside affairs for which he had responsibility and so he invited his wife's nephews, Cornelius and Daniel Hanbury to live with them and help at Plough Court.<sup>17</sup>

It seems possible that during his time in London Matthew might have worked at Plough Court as

a qualified apothecary, perhaps alongside the Hanbury brothers, and attended lectures on chemistry given by William Allen at Guy's Hospital. When, in 1824, Matthew returned to London he was familiar with the City where he knew several doctors and from where many of his early patients came.

While in London in 1809, Matthew continued associating with the Sandemianians at their London meeting house. One of the affairs which Oswald tried to settle while he was in London during the latter half of 1808 was his bill with the publishers who had produced his edition of his father's essay *The Dangers of Philosophy to the Faith and Order of the Churches of Christ*. Copies remained unsold and Oswald had tried to encourage London Sandemianians to read them. Surplus copies were left with Strahan, the publisher, to be distributed freely among the brothers.<sup>18</sup> Matthew described an incident that took place while he was attending the meeting house to Oswald who wrote: 'In a letter dated February 1809 my brother Matthew announcing his safe arrival, inserted the following remark: "Mr Wass burnt your book and gave orders for the rest not to be given. Is this the Brownist<sup>1\*</sup> spirit you are of? What did you say and do (to) Strahan? But excuse my reflections."' <sup>19</sup> Oswald's letter to Strahan is in his Memoirs. It was innocent enough if rather sanctimonious. Mr Wass was the elder in charge of the London Sandemianians. Matthew must have been at the Sabbath meeting and heard both his father and brother humiliated in front of the congregation when the former's Essay was condemned and destroyed.

A quarrelsome correspondence continued between the brothers during Matthew's time in London. On 8 March 1810 Oswald wrote that he was ready to send Matthew the five hundred pounds left to him by Dr Withers, Oswald's brother-in-law. This legacy must have enabled Matthew to return to Edinburgh. Oswald informs us that by the summer of 1811: 'My brother Matthew, having married a second wife, a Miss Snape of Chester, had returned to Edinburgh and I found had embarked on some considerable speculations as a partner but also had opened a large and handsome shop in Princes Street in the New Town, and then he removed to another in St. David's Street.'<sup>20</sup>

Matthew matriculated for the 1810-11 session at the medical school as he did for alternate years thereafter, 1812-13 and 1814-15. He thus, in theory, completed four years of study which in those times was the usual length of a degree in medicine, though in fact he missed large sections of the sessions for which he matriculated.

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<sup>1\*</sup>A member of an English Puritan sect, followers of Robert Browne (1550-1633) who denounced the parochial system and ordination and is regarded as the founder of Congregationalism.



### 2.2.3 The Chemist Shop

Matthew described this period in his life in his little booklet *Outlines of a Course of Lectures on Chemical Philosophy* published in 1818: 'When I came for the second time to Edinburgh in 1810 my objects were first, prosecuting and finishing my medical studies and secondly, after graduation, practising Medicine and lecturing on Chemistry; in this I was from some commercial engagements and a pecuniary disappointment, cruelly thwarted.'<sup>21</sup> Matthew devised a plan for financial support on a long-term basis that, he hoped, would take him through his medical degree. In outline his plan was to purchase a business and have some one else run it while he studied full-time, the business paying for maintenance and fees. From 1813 to 1818 there are entries in the Post Office Annual Directory for Edinburgh for 'Matthew Allen, Chemist, 8 St David Street'. In fact it was his wife and his partner who ran the shop. This was the first of two similar schemes, both of which went disastrously wrong.

The first stumbling block to the fulfilment of the plan was when Mary, his wife, became pregnant. By December 1813 she had two children, Matthew Oswald, the elder child, and Mary Ann. Shops could not run themselves so Matthew's days as a full-time student came to an end. The best he could do was to attend extra-mural lectures at evening school. Ultimately this did his studies no harm. We know, from the names of his sponsors for his degree, that he was taught by some of the best-known lecturers in Edinburgh at that time. Dr John Barclay FRCP, who gave classes in anatomy and surgery and supervised practical anatomy: 'Lectured twice daily since his classroom could not accommodate at one sitting the hundreds of students who wished to attend.'<sup>22</sup> Dr Sanders lectured on the practice of medicine.<sup>23</sup>

Matthew was utterly naïve in business, trusted the untrustworthy, took advice from the inexperienced and was bullied by landlords and creditors. He lent two hundred pounds to a man named Hirst (probably a fellow apothecary) to invest in his own business, that also failed. Matthew was judged, by this foolish act of kindness, to be a partner in the business and thus was held responsible for the debts. His brother gives us the details of the financial disaster from his point of view:

Having advanced towards his rents upward of £240 besides upwards of £1300 which with interest owing to this day (1 May 1834) will amount with the £250 I am still owing Mr Wilson of Kirkby Lonsdale on his account, to the sum of near £2,200, which is a serious deduction from my property, having entirely swallowed the whole of my patrimonial property, besides entrenching considerably upon other property. In return I have received from my brother no expressions of sympathy and regret, but on the contrary, reproach and abuse.<sup>24</sup>

When Oswald's own finances became involved he wasted no time in seeing for himself what his brother was doing. He arrived in Edinburgh on the 11pm coach on 24 September 1813. After the night in

an hotel he visited Matthew's home and commented in his *Memoirs* on their general situation: 'I was truly sorry to find their situation most miserable and distressing beyond description, tho' only what I had invariably anticipated would be the case, knowing his instability, his want of judgement, his credulity and altogether unfitness for business.'<sup>25</sup>

Matthew's first plan to have his wife work while he studied had failed. He then brought a second plan into operation.

## **2.2.4 The Chemical Works And Soda Water Factory**

He wanted to buy a chemical works in Leith which would be able to produce soda water for commercial sale. His cousin Edward Wilson, who had arrived in Edinburgh before Oswald, was easily persuaded into the scheme. When Oswald arrived he found the purchase of the Chemical Works already completed and undertook to share the costs with his cousin. The solicitor involved with the purchase, a supposed friend of Matthew, absconded with the purchase money of five hundred pounds and the purchase had to be made a second time by Oswald providing a further five hundred pounds. Oswald always wisely stated that he felt the first business — the chemist shop — should have been wound up before beginning the second venture with a clean slate. This was never done. The shop (it was also the family home) had a quarterly rent to be paid which was continually in arrears and a burden around Oswald's neck, as he had originally stood Caution when the shop was purchased by his brother.

He had previously applied to me for pecuniary assistance under the most plausible assurances, that his concerns were most prosperous, and that he would soon repay me with thanks. When he changed his residence he applied to me to become Caution for the rent of his house in St David Street, £120 per annum saying it was a mere matter of form, that I should never suffer any inconvenience. But to my surprise and sorrow one year had scarce elapsed before I was called upon to advance one half year's rent and the whole remainder of the term of six years I had the house upon my own hands. I appointed Mr Campbell of Edinburgh as my law agent for the purpose of making what he could of the premises. The deficiency of rent every year I had to make up which proved a most serious encumbrance and greatly embarrassed me in my circumstances.<sup>26</sup>

However, the shop remained the retail outlet for the sale of the soda water from the chemical factory that eventually might have become profitable had it not been for other circumstances.<sup>27</sup>

Matthew had never had any intention of running a commercial business himself and planned for an acquaintance to come from York to manage the factory. He set up these business arrangements in September 1813 with the main purpose of financing his medical studies for the coming academic year. He did not, however, get as far as matriculation for the coming session:

(This) led me, [...] into a plan of beginning a new concern in connection with a friend in England, and of which concern he alone was to have the management. This arrangement was adopted that it might not interfere with the views I still entertained. This friend, after everything was ready for his entrance on the charge, was, by a severe Haemoptysis, and consequent Phthisis Pulmonalis, prevented from doing so. After waiting in suspense for more than 6 months, his death obliged me, contrary to my wishes, my feelings, my habits, and my former way of life, to undertake it myself. This not only defeated my original plan, but also produced along with harassed spirits, ill health, [lack of] confidence in others, great losses by securities, loans of money, connections with others etc. a long and dreadful succession of most distressing circumstances, [...] it is vain now, a torture which is increased by kindness and by proofs I daily receive that my original plans would have succeeded well.<sup>28</sup>

The Memoirs contain a series of letters that were written to Oswald from Mary Allen, Matthew's wife, from 1814 to the time of her death in April 1817.

### **2.2.5 The Correspondence Of Oswald With His Sister-In-Law Mary Allen**

It was in a letter to Oswald in January 1814, shortly after his visit to Edinburgh, that Mary Allen broke the news that Matthew was in prison: 'My poor dear unfortunate husband was, last Monday week, suddenly and unexpectedly apprehended and conveyed to prison by Bevans of London for debt contracted for Drugs and for which he was wholly unable to pay.'<sup>29</sup>

He was declared a bankrupt and his goods sequestrated before he was released. Their living accommodation was sub-let, the children boarded out, while Mary worked in the shop by day and slept in the prison with her husband at night. In February 1814 he was still confined and in a letter to her brother-in-law Mary included a statement drawn up by Matthew placing his debts at over three hundred pounds. By September she was writing from her parent's home in Wigan where for a time the whole family, including Matthew, appeared to be staying. Sale of goods and property, rent from sub-letting, help from Oswald? How the debt was paid is unknown, but paid it must have been. Matthew, undeterred by debt, prison and failed plans, must have shortly returned to Edinburgh for he once more matriculated at the university for the academic year 1814-15. This time, loathsome as he found it, he tells us he worked in the factory and produced the soda water himself.

Mary returned from Wigan to Edinburgh after a visit to York in October 1814. It seemed that they were optimistic of a fresh start and a year went by in which business began to improve. Then Matthew was once again arrested and spent four months in prison from November 1815 to February 1816. Once again Mary wrote to Oswald:

For the trifling venial omission of selling three bottles of soda water without Stamp Duty — every Laboratory in town had been in the habit of selling without stamps and his customers strenuously opposed it as an unjust tax and even Lord Gillis who is one of the Lords of Session would not pay

it. Extreme poverty had sometimes prevented him laying in a sufficient supply of stamps. Besides we were in the habit of selling our soda water on credit and we were obliged to pay ready money for the duty. Our only opponent in the business took cruel advantage of my poor husband and maliciously lodged an information against him with a vigour unparalleled in Scotland. He has lain in prison two months without aliments, his shop shut up, his credit lost and his family left to the bounty of a few friends.<sup>30</sup>

Matthew had to face the fact that any further attempt at study that year was impossible. He never again returned to his studies at the university and his attendance at lectures was insufficient to qualify him to sit the final examinations. There were however at that time other ways of obtaining a degree. Some universities were prepared to award degrees to men able to pay the required fee and provide evidence of lectures attended. Two sponsors, qualified men in their field, were also needed and a certificate of professional competence. Five years later, in 1821, Allen was able to supply these requirements to Marischal College, Aberdeen University and in July 1821 he was granted the degree of MD - Medical Doctor. His sponsors were Dr John Barclay and Dr Sanders of Edinburgh and George Kerr of Aberdeen.<sup>31</sup> So in the end his long toil as a student paid off.

Immediately after Allen had served his four months in prison, he and his family left Edinburgh. They appear to have gone first to Perth. He probably chose to go to a place where he had contacts and friends. There, in Perth was the original Sandemanian church, founded by Robert Sandeman. Oswald had spent the Sabbath with members of this congregation after he visited Edinburgh in 1813. We know, from the *Memoirs*, that Matthew's cousin Oswald, of Scarrhead farm near Gayle, kept up a correspondence with this congregation and that the granddaughter of Matthew's brother Edward would some fifty years later marry into a leading Sandemanian family from Perth. In 1818 Matthew was still living there in Woodend Cottage. It might well have been at this same cottage that his son Thomas was born in April 1816. From there he travelled about Scotland giving his lectures on chemical philosophy.

He took to the life of an itinerant lecturer, mostly out of sheer necessity to support his family but partly because, after medical studies, his ambition had always been, as he wrote in his booklet *Outlines*, to lecture on chemistry. It was a subject in which he was competent.

### 2.3 Lecturer in Chemical Philosophy

Matthew Allen's qualifications in the subject were threefold. Having served his seven-year apprenticeship with his brother and become a Surgeon/Apothecary he then became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons. It is also probable that in 1809-10 he had attended the lectures of William Allen, one

of the foremost lecturers in chemistry in London at the time. He then studied the subject again at Edinburgh University. Matthew Allen obviously knew a lot about his subject and was up to date with current opinions. However, the scheme which he set out to accomplish had so many parallels with much of what William Allen of Plough Court was doing that it cannot go unremarked. He seems to have admired the London druggist's business acumen and set out to emulate him. He stated his own desire to be a chemistry lecturer.<sup>32</sup> He attempted to support his own shop in Edinburgh with a chemical works just as the shop in Plough Court was supported by Bevan's chemical works. It must have been to Allen's great chagrin that it was to Bevans of London to whom he was in debt and that it was they who had had him imprisoned in 1814.<sup>33</sup>

### **2.3.1 Chemistry**

Chemistry was considered a modern subject in 1810. It was the first discipline to break away from physical science and become a specialist subject on its own. It had in the years just prior to this made rapid progress compared with previous centuries during which the body of knowledge had remained fairly static. So what had Matthew Allen learned about Chemistry?

#### **2.3.1.1 In London**

William Allen's lectures at Guy's Hospital were shared with Drs Babington and Marcet. They brought out *A Syllabus of a Course of Chemical Lectures read at Guy's Hospital in 1811*.<sup>34</sup> Publishing a syllabus was a common practice of lecturers at the time and Matthew did the same in 1818. The syllabus of the Guy's Hospital doctors indicated that their course was of an empirical nature, and like Lavoisier, whom they followed, they had ruled out atomic speculations from their study of chemistry.<sup>35</sup> Chemists, Lavoisier had said, should rather concentrate on elements, the limit of analysis.<sup>36</sup> William Allen's work coincided with men such as Thomas Beddoes, who specialised in Pneumatics, and Sir Humphry Davy, of the Royal Institution, who was especially interested in the properties of matter and discovered several new natural elements, such as sodium and potassium. The Royal Institution, founded in 1799, was popular amongst London social circles who clamoured for seats to see Davy demonstrate his chemical experiments.

#### **2.3.1.2 In Edinburgh**

At the same time Scotland too had its great scientists who contributed to the current advances in chemistry. In the last decade of the eighteenth-century Sir Joseph Black, discoverer of carbon dioxide and tutor to James Watt the inventor of the steam engine, was professor of chemistry at Edinburgh. (Matthew

Allen twice refers to Black in his essays *On Chemical Philosophy* and the progress that had been made in the understanding of caloric since Black had lectured.) After Black's death in 1799, Dr Thomas Charles Hope, who had been joint professor with him since 1795, succeeded to the chair. Hope had met the French chemist Antoine Lavoisier in Paris and afterwards convinced Black of the correctness of the Frenchman's theory that combustion is not due to the escape of phlogiston, but to a chemical combination of the combustible substance with oxygen. Black introduced Lavoisier's chemistry into the syllabus just before he died. Hope is known for two research projects, one on the density of water and the other as the discoverer of the element Strontium. He is, however, much better remembered for the high quality of his lectures over a period of fifty years. Allen became one of his pupils. Dr Hope's lectures were the most popular in the university. Reading the syllabus that Matthew Allen later used in his lectures contained in his *Outlines of A Course of Lectures On Chemical Philosophy*, one is struck by the similarity in its content to the material covered by Hope.

In his student handbook for 1822 Andrew Bower describes Dr Hope's lectures. They were exciting, fascinating, surprising and in line with the trend set at the fashionable Royal Institution — a must for the modern student. Bower writes:

Those parts of the course, in which the doctrines respecting light and caloric are discussed and illustrated, constitute the most interesting branches that are taught. [...] As the phenomena presented are confessedly the most intricate in chemistry and have exercised the curiosity and attention of the most distinguished Philosophers, the Professor bestows upon them very particular attention. The experiments by which they are illustrated are contrived and arranged with great skill, and the neatness with which they are performed, excite the just admiration of the spectators....

Pneumatic Chemistry particularly occupies the attention of the class and the most splendid and beautiful experiments upon the different gases are performed and exhibited to the students. In the performance of these experiments the Professor's object is to introduce to their notice whatever is calculated to impress the audience with a love to the science. For this purpose such as are most curious and useful and fitted to explain the phenomena of nature are selected. At the same time no expense is spared and such apparatus is employed as is best fitted to show both the mode of procuring the different substances employed, and to exhibit in as conspicuous a point of view as possible the appearances which take place. These are minutely and distinctly explained and in such a way as to imprint them on the mind.<sup>37</sup>

The flamboyant use of demonstrations obviously drew interest from the professor's student audience. A decade later young Charles Darwin also found Hope's lectures anything but dull: 'Tommy Hope's 'Chemical Drama' was unabashed entertainment. It was all done 'with great eclat' and as a result it attracted the largest class in the university. (Charles was one of five hundred and three students that year.) Living solely off his fees Hope had dropped all research and perfected his chemical amusements using large-scale apparatus visible to everybody.'<sup>38</sup>

Allen copied these displays very successfully showing that as well as having a good basic knowledge he was really gifted at practical demonstrations with which he greatly pleased his audiences.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.3.1.3 An Alternative Approach

The above was the training Allen had had and it was not only up to date but also in line with what were then considered orthodox views on chemical philosophy. Allen's views, however, despite his training, were not orthodox. He dismissed Lavoisier, and others of his school of thought, followed so faithfully by William Allen in London and Thomas Hope in Edinburgh.<sup>40</sup> His own views were more in line with an alternative scientific approach which went as far back as Plato (428-347BC) and has existed alongside conventional theories up to the end of the twentieth-century. Many traditionalists had speculated on a unifying principle behind all nature and yet had not pursued their ideas further. There were others, however, who had taken these ideas more seriously and continued to develop them. Plato had contrasted the material world and its particulars with the real unchanging world of forms or ideas. He conceived this world in which we live as merely a shadow emanating from the great reality which lay behind it. Plato's teaching has often been said to be behind those who postulated a unifying principle in natural science.<sup>41</sup> One of these in the sixteenth-century was Paracelsus (1493-1541) who, in a revolt against degenerate Aristotelian philosophy, adopted neo-Platonic ideas. 'A fundamental concept of this [...] philosophy was the interrelation of all the phenomena of the universe, such that every phenomenon has an influence upon every other.'<sup>42</sup>

Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) too, had toyed with the idea of a general universal principle. It was an idea which he never developed further than the postulation of 'ether', an attenuated universal gas, present in all empty spaces and penetrating matter as well. He also conjectured that 'ether' might mediate between soul and body.<sup>43</sup> Someone who took up Newton's ideas on ether as a universal principle and attempted to develop them further into an explanation of physics and life, was Bryan Robinson (1680-1754) professor of physics at Trinity College, Dublin. In his enthusiastic search for a unifying principle he ascribed a single fluid as the cause of heat, light, gravity, muscular movement and nervous impulses.<sup>44</sup> There was a hankering desire amongst some eighteenth-century philosophers for a total explanation of all existence.<sup>45</sup> Joseph Priestley (1738-1804) thought it, 'Possible to claim ultimately one great comprehensive law shall be found to govern both the material and intellectual world.'<sup>46</sup>

In 1783 Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794) discovered the oxidation process and established the rules

of chemical combination, giving chemists their first proper understanding of chemical reactions. Attention became fixed on chemical elements and the properties of matter. Thenceforth 'modern' chemistry came into its own as a separate subject. The interest in a unity behind nature was marginalised in the face of discoveries by Davy, Dalton and others. Though sidelined, theories of unification were never totally abandoned and Davy himself acknowledged that the chemistry of his day did not wholly invalidate early eighteenth-century aspirations for a unifying factor in science.<sup>47</sup>

While English scientists developed chemistry and uncovered the elements of matter, German Romantics, both in literature and philosophy, pursued a different course. Newton's concentration on a systematic approach to science, production of hypotheses and development of mathematics was deplored by the early nineteenth-century Romantics who attacked the new scientific methods based on Newton's discoveries. They led a moral revolt against Newtonian physics and its mechanistic roots and argued for an underlying unity in organic and inorganic nature. In literature Goethe (1749-1832) expressed his belief in the *Urphänomen*, an archetype behind all natural forms. Goethe's *Faust* lamented the science that had failed to reveal the ultimate spring of truth.

Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854) conceived of the metaphysical system of *Naturphilosophie*. From 1797 he gave courses of lectures and wrote two books outlining his intellectual quest for totality. He stressed the interdisciplinary nature of all knowledge, as later, did Matthew Allen, and warned his students against specialisation, saying that one must never lose sight of the totality of knowledge.<sup>48</sup> Schelling later attempted a synthesis of philosophy and theology. As Schenk notes: 'All through these writings he makes great play, in a manner sometimes referred to as logical manipulation, with notions such as 'attraction', 'repulsion', 'polarity', 'excitability' and so forth, without taking the trouble to give anything like a clear cut definition of those terms.'<sup>49</sup>

Despite his eccentricities, Schelling maintained a following of philosophers who were greatly attracted by his intense enthusiasm for his beliefs. *Naturphilosophie* was widely discussed and adhered to by some, notably in the medical profession. Theories about the meaning of various symptoms in relation to the general nature of disease abounded to the detriment of experimentation and practical observations. The arrogant neglect of the empirical had truly disastrous effects and led Schelling to cause the death of a patient. It has been said that German medicine lagged behind other European countries by fifty years due to Schelling's teachings. This did not prevent him being given an honorary degree in medicine. It was said of him, however, that he had excellent talents but belonged to those men who are generally quickly burnt



up and extinguished. From 1812 onwards he never published another work.

The similarity in attitude, speculation and pomposity between Schelling and Matthew Allen, as well as the willingness to go out on a limb, is startling. Allen's similarity to Schelling even extends to the accusation of 'logical manipulation' (See quotation above). Allen too inclined to use terms such as 'attraction' and 'polarity' while interpreting them in his own unique way. There is no evidence that he was influenced by Schelling directly — though Allen might have read German, there is no proof of it — but Allen does seem to have somehow come under the influence of *Naturphilosophie*.

The English Romantic poets were all believers in grand synthesising schemes and at odds with 'modern' scientific methods, though they were not as extreme as their German counterparts. The search for a universal life principle reached its apotheosis in poetry — a more suitable medium than the increasingly empirical methods of British scientific research. (See the review of Allen's work on p46 and its final comment.) Wordsworth saw beneath all nature a mystic universal cause — a secret spring affecting all life:

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.<sup>50</sup>

Shelley too, inspired by Godwin's Law of Necessity, wrote in *Queen Mab* (VI 146-173):

Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light,  
Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffused  
A Spirit of activity and life,  
That knows no terms, cessation and decay;  
That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,  
Extinguished in the dampness of the grave,  
Awhile there slumbers...  
Whilst to the eye of shipwrecked mariner,  
Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,  
All seems unlinked contingency and chance:  
No atom of this turbulence fulfils  
A vague and unnecessitated task,  
Or acts but as it must and ought to act...  
Spirit of Nature! All sufficing Power,  
Necessity! Thou mother of the world.<sup>51</sup>

However, it was the poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge who forged the link between the German Romantic School and scientific thought in England. He had met Schelling while in Germany in 1798-1799 and adopted his *Naturphilosophie* which from 1819 onwards, after Coleridge had moved to

live in Highgate, he attempted to apply to chemistry, geology, physiology and cosmology. Coleridge developed what he called dynamic philosophy dealing with living, moving, organic matter as opposed to the 'living-dead' matter of passive, mechanistic experimentation. Dynamic science dealt with organicism, synthesis and unification — everything was related to everything else. This led to Coleridge's interest in the connection between mind and nature. It was an interest already shared with Schelling. This way of looking at science and life by individuals, literary and scientific, Matthew Allen among them, perpetuated the search for the elusive grand principle that unified all of life.<sup>52</sup>

Was Matthew Allen influenced directly by Coleridge? Allen's views had developed before Coleridge put his own into print, and it was only in 1819, the year that Allen's *Essays* were published, that Coleridge turned his mind specifically to Chemistry.<sup>53</sup> It is to be expected that Allen would have given credit for some of his own views on chemistry to his university tutor or tutors, but he dates his views as prior to his time in Edinburgh and London. He prefaced his syllabus for his lectures by saying: 'I say this not from the captivating warmth which novelty produces, but from an experience which more than 12 years has steadily supported.'<sup>54</sup> This was written in 1818. If we take his time scale as accurate, Allen appears to be saying that he had held these opinions since 1806 or before. This is confirmed by a footnote in his essays *On Chemical Philosophy* that reads: 'This and every part of this view or theory of the subject was entertained in 1806 as may be proved by a correspondence with the late Dr Fawcett in Chester if these letters are still in existence.'<sup>55</sup> He gives the impression that, despite all his university training he still clung passionately to the views shared with a man whose influence over him in his early years, though brief, seems to have been very strong. Allen never gives any other indication as to how he first arrived at ideas about a grand universal principle and why he made them his own.<sup>56</sup> But having done so he saw the propagation of these views as a life's mission, writing:

However inauspicious circumstances may be, and however slow the process of convincing others [...] I am still of the opinion [...] that it is more galling to the feelings to receive approbation without intelligence, than that condemnation which the blindness of prejudice inflicts. [...] I have everywhere found those, who are esteemed capable of judging for themselves, approve and admire this theory in proportion as they knew and understood it.<sup>57</sup>

He added the concept to his lecturing and called it *The Grand Agent*, or principal cause underlying all natural processes. Heat, light and electricity were in his view different expressions of this one Grand Agent. In his *Outline of a Course of Lectures on Chemical Philosophy* (1818) Allen gives a brief overview of his theme which he later expanded in his essays *On Chemical Philosophy* published in 1819:

According to this theory [...] I assert there is only ONE GRAND POWER OR AGENT IN CREATION — that the different effects and appearances which have hitherto been classed under different names are all clearly explained as arising, not from powers differing in kind, but from differences in the quantity, energy, and rapidity of the movements of this power, operating on different kinds of matter and in different circumstances [...] All the facts and experiments accumulated in science are, in my opinion, not only explained on these principles, but on no other can I explain and understand them.<sup>58</sup>

### 2.3.2 The Seven Essays

The nature of the one grand, unifying principle behind all natural phenomena, acknowledged by the persistent minority since antiquity is the central theme of the *Essays*. Rather than merely postulating its existence he has attempted to prove its actions particularly in the field of physics and chemistry, with regard to the then current debate about electricity and galvanism and in what ways they differ. He uses the expression 'the Power' to describe this grand principle, which he sees as coming into being at the first sublime command or fiat of the Creator: 'Let one power be diffused throughout the universe and let every kind and state and form of material existence have its own appropriate and relative share.'<sup>59</sup> (This could be in twentieth-century terms compared to the power that instituted the 'Big Bang', or in later nineteenth-century terms the chance force that initiated evolution from primeval slime.) The subject of chemical philosophy in Allen's view is not about chemistry alone but is that which, 'removes the veil from the face of Nature and reveals the centre and circumference of a mighty circle wherein all science is included.' (I p.119).

He groups electricity, galvanism, magnetism, caloric and light under the term The Attractive Agencies and sees them: 'Not as powers themselves, but rather as primary effects of the one power arising from the nature of the substances on which, and the circumstances in which, the properties and energetic actions of one power are exerted and applied.'(II, 120) He attempts, he says, to put together a chain of reasoning to explain his theory in more detail than anyone else has ever done, whom, he claims, has held similar views. Amongst these, he says, were Lord Bacon, Copernicus, Kepler, Sir Isaac Newton, Fermat, Roberval, Galileo, etc.

It is here that we possibly see the influence of Coleridge on Allen directly. The former had since 1809 published a weekly journal called *The Friend* and in 1818, just at the time when Allen began his *Essays*, Coleridge began a series in his journal on the History of Science. Coleridge considered certain men to be of prime importance, chiefly Kepler, for discovering the laws of planetary motion and the dynamics of the solar system, as well as Sir Francis Bacon, whom he considered a kind of British Plato, and Newton, whom he saw as important only as heir to Kepler, developing his ideas on the solar system.<sup>60</sup> Allen echoes

these names and, identifying with Coleridge's basic beliefs, claims them as forebears of his own ideas. He claims that all of them had the same sublime views of the majestic simplicity of Nature. He does not claim superiority to these great minds but cautions: 'Let it not be conceived that in speaking of one grand power or agent in nature, I suppose that it is for us to understand its nature or essence, or even all its properties and effects.'(III, 341) He quotes Lord Bacon with whom he is in agreement: 'It is unphilosophical to introduce a number of powers and agencies in creation, when one will better apply and answer the purpose.' (III, 341. Allen gives virtually no sources for his quotations other than the author's name.) The power was not only that behind original creation but also the force which sustains creation: 'As by one power the present states and form [...] were evolved so also by the same power they are supported and preserved in that state, or changed from one state and stage of existence to another.'(III, 341) This brings him to his first definition of the Power: 'That which produces all the motion and union of matter.' <sup>61</sup> (III, 342) It is a definition of the cause that includes every other cause. Therefore there are no separate and distinct causes for each artificial and arbitrary division of science.<sup>62</sup> The Power is soluble and mutable and all changes in matter are mere exchanges of this power whether they are minute and unseen or obvious and striking, they are infinitely varied both in their quantity and quality.

Allen is aware of the various opinions regarding particles of matter and their movements. He rejects Lavoisier's views of combustion which he says do not account for heat and flame. Confounding the difference between that which may be the same in kind, but different in degree, is, in his opinion, 'On all subjects the most frequent cause of error in our reasoning and in our practice.'(VI, 343) He denies that heat and flame arise from either hydrogen or oxygen but rather insists that they arise from both. 'It would [...],' he says, 'have been quite natural for the chemists at the time of Lavoisier and the discovery of the(se) gases to consider [...] the solution of substances in this power as that which formed the gaseous state of existence [...] we find them with great difficulty refraining from doing so.'(VI, 55-56) He quotes from Lavoisier: "In each species of gas I shall distinguish between the caloric which in some measure answers the purpose of a solvent, and the substance which is in combination with caloric and forms the base of the gas." <sup>63</sup> (VI, 56) Allen objects: 'Why say "in some measure" and not at once in plain terms "it is the solvent"' (VI, 56) He speaks out in favour of Fourcroy <sup>64</sup> who: 'Considered the gases as the solution of substances in caloric' and that he, Allen: 'Considered this as, preparing the way for the explanation of some cases where no theory has yet been offered at all worthy of the name.'(VI, 57) He then refers to galvanism in particular.

In the final Essay Allen describes the process of Galvanism, (what today would be called electrolysis) demonstrating, according to his theory, the necessity of the power acting as a solvent for both hydrogen and oxygen. It is apparent that he is describing experiments which he has carried out himself.<sup>65</sup> Having explained the galvanic apparatus, the copper and zinc plates, acid solution etc. his explanation continues as follows:<sup>66</sup>

There is demanded a still larger quantity of this power to give it (hydrogen) [...] the gaseous form. [...] The demand is made through the nearest and best conductor, which [...] must be the copper; the copper is thus robbed of its natural quantity [...] and instantly demands its due and natural share (of the power) from the earth and surrounding medium. [...] Received, it is instantly absorbed by the oxygen and hydrogen assuming the æriform state. This [...] exhibits the correctness of the law already [...] hinted at — bodies are, relatively to others, positive when they are relatively worse conductors. The galvanic action [...] does in some measure accumulate in the solution, on the principle of its being the worse conductor; yet this accumulation is in part prevented, by the current demanded to support the changes going on, which stream [...] is carried by the conducting power of the metals: so that [...] there is produced by chemical means a current of this power, as there is by mechanical means in electric contrivances. (VII, 113) [...] The galvanic action will continue as long as these gaseous results require and demand this power. [...] The oxygen having been separated from its combination with hydrogen in the state of water, [...] and having demanded this power to hold it in solution is again attracted to, and deposited on the metal, so that this solvent is here again set at liberty. Whereas the hydrogen having no such attraction for the metal, the energies of this power are here not at liberty, but are taken up with holding the hydrogen in solution or in the gaseous state. [...] The power is there (released from the oxygen), but being unoccupied, it is in its pure and attenuated state, and of course invisible [...]

I am aware [...] that this is not the common statement of the difference in their capacity. (VII, 114) [...] I conceive the methods hitherto used to ascertain capacity to be fallacious [...] that it is not alone the transference of heat from one body to another, or the quantity of ice which bodies will melt in cooling, which can determine it; but how far this power is separated in its pure and unconfined form, and of course makes its escape without having time to produce any of these effects. [...] Galvanism I shall therefore define as: That object of science which treats of some of the chemical and natural means of partially separating the Grand Agent from some of its combinations and of ascertaining its actions in that state. Electricity (is) [...] the most pure and separate form of fire, or of the power, which produces the phænomena of heat and flame; and consequently more attenuated than any other, more rapid in its movements, and less resistible in its passage through substances.

Hence we perceive the solution to that most interesting question, stated, but not answered, in [...] the Edinburgh Encyclopædia 'How do galvanism and electricity differ from each another?' (VII, 115)

Allen spoke and wrote in the popular terms of the time concerning, galvanism, electricity, gases, light, heat and caloric. This last subject indicates where chemistry stood in those years and how close it was to a very major step forward in its development. A modern author describes the understanding of caloric at that period in the history of chemistry:

In about 1820, they knew there was something called 'heat' but they were talking about it in terms that would later sound ridiculous. They weren't even sure what heat was, much less how it worked. Most reputable scientists of the day were convinced that a red hot poker, say, was densely laden with a weightless, invisible fluid known as CALORIC which would flow out of the poker into cooler, less caloric-rich bodies, at the slightest opportunity. Only a minority thought that heat might represent some kind of microscopic motion in the poker's atoms [...]

(The minority was right) Moreover no one at the time seems to have imagined that messy complicated things like steam engines, chemical reactions and electric batteries could all be governed by simple general laws. It was only in 1824 that a young French engineer (Carnot) published [...] the Second law of thermodynamics.<sup>67</sup>

This, the second law of thermodynamics, is as near as one can come to a 'simple general law' governing heat. It disproves the existence of caloric which, like many in his time, Allen believed in. Allen looked further ahead than this. He looked for a simple general principle or cause underlying all natural processes. Mainstream scientists did not seriously take up the quest for this unification until the early twentieth-century. Allen's dream of a single force behind physical and chemical manifestations did not become an accepted scientific fact until the establishment of the 'electroweak theory' in the second half of the twentieth-century.<sup>68</sup>

Allen's views on chemical philosophy were well accepted and received more positively by the critics than was his later textbook on insanity *Essays on the Classification of the Insane*. In the 'Annual Review of Medicine and Collateral Science for 1818' of the *London Medical Repository*, the following review of the *Essays* was given:

In The Philosophical Magazine the reader will find a series of Essays by Dr Allen; rich in ingenuity and abounding in masterly views on the great subject of chemical agency as effecting changes in the modes of existence of physical matters. These essays all go upon the principle, that in every change of existence that matter is capable of undergoing caloric is given out or absorbed in the form of either electricity, of galvanism, of caloric or of light. Respecting the important question which has recently agitated the philosophical world, and which has been proposed as a prize in one of the societies abroad; viz.: In what does the difference consist between Galvanism and Electricity? Mr Allen observes:

'In electricity we contrive by mechanical means to collect the loose and un-combined quantity from the earth and surrounding medium, and this we do in circumstances in which it has nothing to act upon, as free from moisture of any kind as possible; in fact from everything readily soluble in heat or in this power. I would therefore define electricity to be the object of science, which treats of the mechanical and natural means of separating this Grand Agent from some of its combinations, and of ascertaining its actions in this state. [...] In galvanism, on the other hand, this solvent fire, this electric fire, is produced in circumstances in which it has Substances to act upon; substances which are most readily dissolved in it; substances in fact which seem to form the grand medium between this power and passive substances and which are partially dissolved in it. And hence I define galvanism as the electric fire, or Grand Agent, only partially separated from its combinations; by which I refer principally to oxygen and hydrogen.'

After illustrating this principle, by referring to the circumstances in which the chemical agency of galvanism is more conspicuous than that of electricity, he adds:

'Thus we perceive, that when the Grand Agent of nature is more perfectly separated from its combinations it is ELECTRICITY, when partially separated, GALVANISM.'

Of these views and principles we have a more ample illustration and defence as the author proceeds in his investigation; and the whole inquiry is conducted with much philosophical acumen. Hypothetical, of course part of it must be: but how different are the hypotheses of the present from those of former times, when science was a sort of poetry and dealt in abstractions and inventions.<sup>69</sup>

This review is positive and complimentary. However, it seems to ignore, or take for granted, Allen's main emphasis on a grand universal principle at work behind all things, including the processes of electrolysis, and thus leaves one wondering if the reviewer truly understood Allen's purpose. Though Allen demonstrates electricity and galvanism at work and gives his definition of the two, and their differences—based on his own experiments — this is still seen by the reviewer as hypothetical. The final sentence, however, seems to sum up Allen's position well — he was accepted as part of the Romantic school, hypothesising, yet at the same time experimenting in an attempt to prove his views. He presented actions — *faits accomplis* — instead of theories couched in poetic terms and, unlike Schelling, he could not be accused of the arrogant neglect of the empirical.

### **2.3.3 Itinerant Lecturing And Personal Breakdown**

#### **2.3.3.1 The Delayed Syllabus**

Oswald Allen writing in retrospect in 1833 says that his sister-in-law, Mary, died in the summer of 1816 in consequence of childbirth. She did in fact linger on for a full year after her son was born. Matthew, having had some success with his lecturing during this year was eager to produce a written syllabus to distribute at his future lectures. To the brief booklet, containing only the outline of each of his lectures, he added a long introduction, almost doubling the size of the book. He felt the need to describe his previous experience in chemistry, his aims and the reasons for the delay between commencing his lecturing and producing a syllabus. In so doing he found it impossible to disentangle himself from his personal family situation and his own emotional stress. The result was a most unusual 'scientific document'. Its most interesting and useful content for the present day reader is the autobiographical material it contains.<sup>70</sup> He wrote:

First — it (the syllabus) was begun, and one page printed after another and given to my audience (then attending a course on Chemical Philosophy, April 1817), at the commencement of each lecture, with the sole purpose of laying before them, in an unusually enlarged syllabus, a slight sketch of some peculiar doctrines on the subject Secondly [...] the cause which has produced the delay in question. These outlines were begun in April 1817 [...] Mrs Allen was suddenly taken ill, and the first proof sheets were corrected during my watchings as a nurse. The event of her death, which took place a few days after this, threw my mind into that state in which the power of confining its attention to anything of a serious nature, and still more so to such objects of association with that event, as this became, if not absolutely impossible, at least difficult and dangerous in the extreme.<sup>71</sup>

#### **2.3.3.2 Kirkcaldy**

We have some evidence of Allen's lecturing capability and of the harrowing events that continued to beset him at every turn, events which caused the onset of deep depression, possibly suicidal, and caused

those who saw him to comment on his strange behaviour. Just prior to his wife's death, Matthew Allen had been lecturing in the town of Kirkcaldy. Amongst his audience was the young, as yet unknown Scotsman, Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle wrote to a friend on 31 March 1817: 'Mr Allen, a Yorkshire man [...] has been expounding the doctrines of chemical philosophy amongst us for the past three months. He seems to possess talents — but to be very much addicted to building hypotheses.'<sup>72</sup> This was in fact quite fair praise from Carlyle, though he was scathing about Allen's lectures on another subject — phrenology — to which we shall come later. Carlyle could not have known that, a few days after his writing this, the lecturer's wife had died; neither could he have understood the turmoil in Allen's life during those summer months in 1817. For in October 1817 Allen lectured again in Kirkcaldy and Carlyle saw in him something more akin to madness than to talent. Writing again to a friend in November 1817 he said:

A month ago that same Allen whom I have mentioned before gave us a concluding lecture on the applications of Spurzheim's theory of Cranioscopy. It was greatly past comprehension. He seemed to have taken the flywheel from his brain and said to it — brain, be at speed — produce me stuff — no matter of what colour, shape or texture — and truly it was a frantic, incoherent story as heart could wish.<sup>73</sup>

### 2.3.3.3 The Loss of His Children

Allen described this period of his life as a *torture*: 'A long and dreadful succession of most distressing circumstances.'<sup>74</sup> It took courage for him to take to the lecturing circuit again that October. He had not only been through grief but depression and the loss of his children. Ann Snape, his late wife's sister, had been to Perth to collect the children, to take them back to her parent's home at Billinge near Wigan. It seems she was originally only going to take the youngest child but seeing Allen's state of mind she took charge of all three. They remained with their grandparents and aunts for the next seven years. While on her journey to Perth Ann visited Edinburgh and there she found that her brother-in-law's partner, was still running the shop in St David's Street. He was being threatened with ruin by Campbell, the business and financial agent appointed by Oswald after his visit to Edinburgh in 1813. Campbell was a fellow member of the Sandemanians in that city and was the same man who, when asked by Mary Allen to help get Matthew Allen out of prison in 1816, had said to her — 'Allen is a poor, silly fool and better in jail than anywhere else.'<sup>75</sup>

Ann Snape at once wrote to Oswald pleading on behalf of Matthew and his partner and in his reply Oswald assured her that Campbell had simply misunderstood the situation. There is no doubt that Campbell was a hard man; that probably Oswald knew this and, with regard to Matthew's affairs, turned a blind eye to it or even encouraged him. Ann Snape's letter is worth quoting extensively as it shows that



Matthew Allen's business problems went on and on even while personal tragedy overcame him and that, at this period in 1817, he was in a terrible state of personal anguish which he himself later also acknowledged.

She wrote on 22 June of that year:

I am on the way to Perth to fetch the infant my dear lamented sister left to my care. The grief I felt on entering this town was not a little increased by hearing from Mr Shelton (your brother's partner in the shop) the intention Mr Campbell has expressed to go to the utmost length to ruin your brother. From the very high character my dear departed sister has more than once given you, I cannot believe that you have authorised Mr C. to go to the lengths he swears he will, particularly at this time. I am sorry to judge harshly of your friend but I fear he is gratifying his own personal feelings rather than serving his clients. I understand your brother once offended Mr Campbell and it seems he is glad of an opportunity of being revenged, at least it is supposed from the oath he made use of and the pleasure that was expressed in his countenance at the time. I cannot believe that you can possibly sanction such a thing. I believe that you have suffered much from the imprudence of your brother, so have our family, particularly in the late melancholy events. But we do not think this is a time for reproach. We think he has enough on his mind at present, and to reflect on what has passed would be cruel and might be the means of driving him to desperation. I believe kindness will be the best reproach at this time. I do trust what has happened lately will convince him that his own way is not always the best [...] I am going to Perth tomorrow or the next day. I have not seen your brother, though I hear he is in very low spirits. I trust Mr Campbell will not do what he threatens and arrest Mr A. in a place where his wife is buried, and is scarcely cold in her grave [...] I hope and trust if you have given Mr C. such orders you will have the goodness to withdraw them, as it cannot answer a good end and may do your brother an injury. Mr Shelton tells me that if he had time given he could make up their part of the rent as the business is now doing better. [...] I am sure it is not your wish that he (Matthew) should starve to death in a jail. I have seen him in one and relieved him but I trust the father of my dear sister's children will never be so disgraced again.<sup>76</sup>

We know very little about what happened to Matthew Allen after the end of 1817 but have to assume that he went on with his itinerant lecturing. By November 1818 he was still at Perth in Woodend Cottage where he finally finished his chemistry syllabus in *Outlines of a Course of Lectures on Chemical Philosophy*. In July 1819 Oswald wrote to Matthew about the advertisement for the post of superintendent at the York Asylum and received several letters from him from Edinburgh where he appeared to be staying temporarily in boarding houses, but by 15 July 1819 he was back in York and staying at Colliergate with his brother and family. On arrival in York his first and most urgent task seems to have been to complete the series of seven essays *On Chemical Philosophy* which were that year published in *The Philosophical Magazine*.

This seemed to bring to an end a phase in Allen's life — which ultimately was not of first importance — and an end to his vogue for chemistry. Less than a year later Allen wrote to Thomas Carlyle that he had 'quitted science'.<sup>77</sup> It is not clear why he made this avowal. He does not appear to have meant science in general — as he retained his phrenological and medical interests — but chemistry in particular. By then he was immersed in his work at the York Asylum. Once Allen began his work amongst the insane and then obtained his MD — no longer holding the profession of Apothecary/Surgeon alone — chemistry

as a subject lost its interest, though he always maintained his belief in one Grand Universal Principle. He never again lectured publicly on it and, if anything, it was phrenology that replaced chemical philosophy as his *cause célèbre*.

PART II

MEDICAL PRACTICE - PREPARATORY EXPERIENCE

## CHAPTER III

### SUPERINTENDENT AT YORK ASYLUM 1819 - 1824

In July 1819 Matthew Allen, still a declared bankrupt, was living in Bristoe Street in Edinburgh and his partner was running the chemist shop in St David's Street.<sup>1</sup> He was making plans to take up some kind of employment, and perhaps also looking into the possibility of using his medical studies to some advantage when he received a letter from his brother Oswald about a vacancy for the post of residential apothecary at the York Lunatic Asylum. He delayed his reply, uncertain which path to take, but finally wrote to Oswald saying that he should put his name forward for the post:

The situation is everything I wish as far as my inclinations are consulted, and more adapted to my taste in Medicine and Science than any other. I have often said I should like some situation of that kind that would enable me to study and be useful to the poor insane [...] You shall see me cheerfully shut myself up with Madmen, and sympathise with them, and seek for none for myself.<sup>2</sup>

Leaving Scotland, he returned to York to a post in what had been a notorious institution, but which had latterly undergone major changes.

### 3.1 The York Asylum

#### **3.1.1 Late Eighteenth-Century Attitudes To The Insane And The Early History Of The York Asylum**

During the last quarter of the eighteenth-century in Britain there was a marked change in social attitudes to the treatment of the poor, the criminal, and the mentally deranged in the lower classes. Where they had previously been indiscriminately looked upon as socially deviant and placed together in prisons or workhouses under the responsibility of their parishes, they began to be seen as separate groups, needing separate treatment. The growing pressures on the labour market due to industrialisation drew attention to the distinction between the helpless and the able-bodied amongst the indigent. The task of caring for the insane was gradually taken out of the hands of the parish and taken over by charitable organisations, private enterprise or, from 1808, by the county administration. There was a dawning realisation that *madness* was an *illness* of some kind which needed sympathetic treatment rather than brutal restraint. From this period the medical profession began its fight to prove that insanity had physiological causes which gave medical doctors the right to treatment and control over the mentally ill. Until this time the

majority of carers for the insane had not been medically trained.

However, some thirty to forty years elapsed between this slowly developing conception of madness in the late eighteenth-century and corresponding reforms in treatment. During that time changes took place in the provision of care for lunatics, and the legislation concerning them, at a comparatively rapid pace compared to the previous centuries of neglect. The reforms were at first uncertain and unstructured, as no clear ideas were held of the goals to be obtained. Men, used to the old methods of treating lunatics, control by fear and restraint with chains, were not easily or rapidly convinced and converted to the new attitudes and procedures. The care and treatment of lunacy became a matter of national debate and, in some cases, of national or local scandal.

In August 1772 a proposal for the founding of a charitable Asylum for the Insane was publicly advertised in York. This had the support of the Archbishop of York and twenty-four gentlemen including local physicians. The York Asylum was one of the earliest hospitals for pauper lunatics outside of London to be run by public donation. Only the Bethel Hospital in Norwich, founded in 1713 and institutions in Newcastle and Manchester preceded that in York. The latter opened its doors to its first ten patients, charging eight shillings a week, on 20 September 1777.<sup>3</sup> In its constitution a clause, vital to events in its future, stated that all who donated twenty pounds or more automatically became governors and were entitled to vote at the quarterly meetings of the Court, or governing body. Dr Hunter was appointed superintendent. With a matron and attendants on his staff, he was solely in charge of the day to day running of the asylum. Within ten years the number of patients increased to fifty-four, the full complement that the building was constructed to house. The numbers of patients, however, increased gradually year on year. Premises were extended but the numbers of professional staff were not increased. There was no outside inspection and visits from family and friends of patients were strictly limited, and sometimes disallowed as inconvenient. As the governors showed little interest in the work and rarely made anything but cursory visits, life inside the asylum became closed and secretive.

In 1791 a girl, whose family belonged to The Society of Friends, (or Quakers) died in the asylum after they had been refused visits to her. This prompted the Quakers to establish their own hospital in York for the treatment of the insane in their own Society. The York Retreat was opened in 1796 under the direction of Mr William Tuke, a tea merchant, and run on enlightened lines. A family atmosphere was fostered and innovations included employment and social events for the inmates, and freedom for them to come and go into the town. Physical restraint, even for maniacs and potentially violent patients, was used

only rarely. William Tuke and his grandson Samuel were the primary instigators of Moral Treatment and generally regarded as the founders of a new regime amongst the insane in England.

Some of the governors of the York Asylum, among them Dr Thomas Withers, who was soon to become brother-in-law to Oswald Allen, began to question Dr Hunter's policies. Hunter refused to grant them inspection rights and a division of opinion took place amongst the governors. Withers and others resigned. After 1794 no official visitors were allowed in the asylum. The number of governors declined rapidly, as did donations. By 1804 new contributors averaged only two a year. It was in that year that Dr Best was introduced as Dr Hunter's pupil. To him, and to him alone, Hunter claimed, he would reveal the secret ingredients of his medicines developed for successfully treating insanity.<sup>4</sup>

When Dr Hunter died in 1809, Dr Best was elected as sole physician. The remaining governors apparently had complete confidence in his ability to manage the asylum without outside interference. By 1813 no visits were allowed to patients from anyone without written permission from Dr Best. The governors were effectively barred from their own institution. The original purpose of the charity was lost from sight and there were no safeguards set up against abuse. Best had complete power over staff, patients and the institution.

It was at this time that Samuel Tuke published his book describing The York Retreat and his reformed methods.<sup>5</sup> Best felt personally aggrieved by some of the remarks Tuke made and, by entering into a newspaper controversy with him, drew city-wide attention to his regime at the York Asylum. Angry letters flooded the local press and rumour spread that all was not well behind the York Asylum's locked doors.<sup>6</sup>

Mr Godfrey Higgins, a magistrate of the West Riding, became involved with the affairs at the York Asylum in October 1813 and continued tirelessly in pursuit of evidence of abuse. He published pamphlets calling for better legislation regarding the care of lunatics and raised public awareness until the true extent of the criminal activities at the asylum developed into a nation-wide scandal. His first suspicions that abuse was taking place began when Vicars, a parish pauper, was returned to his family, from the asylum, neglected and maltreated. At a Special Court at the asylum, called by Dr Best, the staff, the only witnesses, perjured themselves, swearing under oath that no abuses had taken place. The governors publicly exonerated the asylum and all who worked there.

Higgins, some of his fellow magistrates, the Tuke family and other concerned people in York

began investigations into further allegations of misconduct. They each paid the requisite twenty pounds to become governors and at the next Court meeting proposed that a committee of investigation be elected. The older governors, and Dr Best and his staff, vehemently opposed this. However, with the support of the Archbishop, the committee was set up and included Higgins and the Tukes. Despite a fire that destroyed a large part of the accommodation and caused the death of four patients, the committee was shown around the premises and found little at fault at the time. Higgins, however, discovered four filthy cells, deliberately hidden from the investigators, in which female patients had been incarcerated in chains.

When the scandal broke evidence was found to prove a long list of horrific crimes, which had taken place during the previous years. They included, among conditions described as resembling 'an Augean Stable', maltreatment, murder, rape, and mechanical restraints of all kinds. Neglect led to the physical malformation and complete mental deterioration of patients, who, far from recovering, remained for decades in the asylum and were treated as incurables. Added to this was the forging and destroying of records to hide the number of deaths that had taken place and the discovery that Dr Hunter had embezzled funds on a large scale. As a result of the investigations Dr Best was forced to resign, his staff was dismissed and a complete reorganisation of the whole asylum took place. A new era began in 1816 totally dissociating itself from what became known as 'The Old Regime'.

### **3.1.2 PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES**

The success of The Retreat in York as an insane asylum and the publication of Samuel Tuke's *Description of The Retreat* led to an attempt at a similar venture in London by another Quaker, Edward Wakefield. His committee began by assessing the already existing facilities for the treatment of lunatics by visiting Guy's Hospital, St Lukes and Bethlem. Conditions at the latter institution were uncovered that proved to be equally as bad as those at York. Wakefield took a group of MPs to see the situation for themselves and this led to a nation-wide enquiry.

#### **3.1.2.1 1815 Enquiries Into Abuses**

A parliamentary Select Committee began its investigations and interviewing of witnesses in April 1815. Godfrey Higgins was the first to give evidence before them. Dr Best also spoke and attempted his own vindication. His denials, however, only left his already blackened reputation in tatters. The physician and the apothecary at Bethlem also tried bluster and denials but they ended in condemning each other and incriminating the matron and other staff who were all found guilty of gross neglect of the patients, and

some, of frequent drunkenness on duty. Those in authority, anxious for reform, used the evidence uncovered as grist to their mill. Investigations were carried out among the remaining charity hospitals and many workhouses and private institutions. Neglect and abuse was everywhere endemic. The Select Committee concluded that: 'Appalling degradation and inhuman treatment were the lot of madmen in every sort of institution in which they were confined.'<sup>7</sup>

Amongst the worst of the private madhouses were Warburton's Red and White Houses in Bethnal Green. Evidence given by the resident apothecary, in a written pamphlet, as well as before the Select Committee, of rats, damp and diseases such as tuberculosis and typhus, described a situation parallel to that prevailing in Bethlem and the York Asylum. Warburton hotly contested this evidence and the committee failed to follow up the allegations and to establish the truth.

In the years immediately following the Select Committee's investigations three attempts were made to pass reform bills through Parliament but on each occasion they were defeated in the House of Lords. In the following decade the reformers did have more success and major legislation was brought in in 1828 and 1845 which substantially relieved the plight of the mentally ill. Across the country more humane methods of care were slowly taken up by individual asylum keepers and Moral Treatment began to replace the chains and other methods of restraint. Before that, however, abuses still continued in some of the same institutions involved in the scandals of 1813-16.

### **3.1.2.2 Further abuses in the mid 1820s**

By 1815 some classification of the patients had taken place in Bethlem Hospital. Men and women were placed in separate wings and the curable and chronic cases in separate galleries of the newly constructed asylum building. Very little else in the way of reforms had been achieved. There was a basement where the disruptive and dirty patients were confined. Here they were habitually kept on straw in a state of degradation. Mechanical restraints were frequently used, though each occasion now had to be recorded by the staff. No effort was made to instil self-control by compassionate means or to establish any kind of moral regime.

In 1827, well after Matthew Allen had left York and opened his own private asylum along reformed lines, a Select Committee sat again at Westminster to receive evidence from paupers, parish overseers and others about the state of patient care at Warburton's Houses for the care of lunatics in Bethnal Green. Amongst the committee was the Hon. Anthony Ashley Cooper, later to become Lord



Shaftesbury. He became famous as champion of the poor, and was Chairman of the Commissioners in Lunacy for over fifty years, from 1828 until his death in 1885.

Slowly there emerged details of patients at Warburton's Houses. Sleeping naked on straw, they were left chained hand and foot when the keepers went off for the weekends. Patients described to the committee the usual events on Monday mornings when the keepers returned. One witness said: 'I have seen them (the insane patients), in the depth of winter when the snow was on the ground, put into a tub of cold water and washed down with a mop [...] just the same as if they were mopping an animal.'<sup>8</sup> Impatient of the tedious proceedings, Ashley found a pretext to go to Mr Warburton's Houses and inspect them for himself. Later he said in the House of Commons:

'I well remember the sounds that assailed my ear and the sights that shocked my eye as we went round that abode of the most wretched.' He was deeply stirred and determined to act on behalf of these, his fellow human beings.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.1.2.3 Improvements at York

In contrast to these asylums which remained chronic offenders against the insane, the asylum in York, which had earlier led the way with its record of abuses, had made great progress with reforms. In 1823 an anonymous book was published, propagandist in style, written in support of the regime and staff at Bethlem, it was entitled, *Sketches in Bedlam, by a Constant Observer*. In the second part of this book, the anonymous writer, thought by some to be the apothecary of that institution, gave detailed case histories. A year before this in 1822 the apothecary at York had also recorded case histories of patients there. A comparison of these two accounts highlights the remarkable change that had taken place in the northern asylum since the scandals of the previous decade. The apothecary in York in 1822 who described some of his patients was Dr Matthew Allen.

It has been written of the Bedlam case studies that they appear to have been descriptions of patients from the basement in the worst condition, displaying the characteristics most frequently associated by the public with desperate and manic madmen. This resulted in visiting being discouraged and 'All the old moral prejudices against the insane', were roused and 'The barriers of fear and apathy', once again erected.<sup>10</sup> Dr Allen wrote of his selection and method for his case studies:

The one principal object I have had constantly in view has been the removal of the erroneous impressions and prejudices which exist almost universally against the insane as if they alone were all furious beasts or infernal demons. I shall therefore, for the express purpose of exhibiting a fair

specimen of the general character of the insane collectively, in their worst and most revolting state, add, in an Appendix to this Essay about 20 of the oldest in age, as well as in duration of the disease [...] taken in regular rotation from the Register Book [...] who had suffered all the brutalising of the old and neglected system of treatment.<sup>11</sup>

Allen gave only numbers to identify his patients. Some of them can be identified today by recourse to the asylum's records, but those in Bedlam were named at the time of the book's publication and while they were still inmates. Both institutions had comparable cases. Some were seemingly uncontrollable maniacs such as Patrick Walsh in Bedlam:

A ferocious maniac [...] who uniformly evinced a character of desperation, vengeance and sanguinary cruelty [...] more characteristic of a tiger than a human being [...] It has been necessary to keep him strongly ironed notwithstanding which he found means to kill two persons. [...] Bloodshed and massacre are the constant topics of his frenzied discourse and seem to afford him high gratification and delight.<sup>12</sup>

In York a patient admitted on 6 August 1800, recorded later by Allen simply as no.18, and who was probably an Italian, John Peter, was still an inmate in 1822.<sup>13</sup> He was, however, one on whom the changed regime was having some effect:

Subject to violent fits [...] would bite and be delighted if he drew blood. Bit a piece completely out of the lip of another — harsh measures seemed justifiable. Formerly kept naked in loose straw [...] Latterly become sensible to kindness and improved in personal cleanliness — much less malignity of feeling [...] something like affection and gratitude to his attendants began to excite in them, without effort, kindly feelings towards him.<sup>14</sup>

In Bedlam Francis Mardin: Thought that he was the Angel Gabriel and that the medical staff were respectively Pontius Pilate, Judas Iscariot and the Devil.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, one of Dr Allen's patients: 'Imagined himself to be Jesus Christ and in proof of it showed me a scar he had in his side, which he said, had been occasioned by his having been pierced with a spear.'<sup>16</sup> In Bedlam a patient admitted six years previously was written off as hopeless: 'Noah Page [...] Though quite an idiot [...] is smart and active in his motions [...] He believes himself to be a king [...] He is in general quiet and harmless, but extremely irritable on the slightest cause, and even dangerous when thus excited. He is left beyond all hope of recovery.'<sup>17</sup> In the Asylum in York No 24, Admitted 1802, Aged twenty five, possibly Betsy Watson of Selby,<sup>18</sup> had been institutionalised for twenty years yet: 'Sometimes furious and maniacal with abusive language or angry and scolding or merely odd and flighty. Now normal for months at a time, agreeable and useful in the house [...] Attributable to the greater mildness of her present attendant. She has friends in York whom she visits.'<sup>19</sup>

The contrasting reports of these two apothecaries are remarkable for their different attitudes towards very similar clinical cases, one scornful and without hope, the other positive, caring and with evidence of change for the better even in some of the *Old Regime* patients. York Asylum had made progress that the other institutions were slow to emulate. This was due, in part, to the enlightened staff and governors of the new regime who had managed the asylum since 1816, but also in a measure to Matthew Allen himself, and his effective management by a strong but sympathetic moral regime.

### 3.1.3 Matthew Allen's Appointment To The York Asylum

#### 3.1.3.1 The Post of Superintendent and what it Meant

In the early nineteenth-century the title Superintendent was a new term based on a new concept of the role of asylum keeper. The men who had previously done the job were considered mere brutal keepers of the mad, little better than those in their charge. The new enlightened regime gave the job respectability, requiring certain 'skills' enabling the exertion of authority without harshness and the exerting of moral pressure resulting in the self-disciplining of patients. As Allen expressed it himself:

When we first encounter them it must be with great mental power and moral force; and this, to be exercised with effect, requires that we first make ourselves beloved and respected by them. Oh! It is a difficult and delicate thing to preserve that spirit, in combating these provoking cases, which alone has the power to overcome and cure them.<sup>20</sup>

In his book *Cases of Insanity*, published in 1831 (and discussed further in section 3.1.4.3 of this chapter) Allen gave a description of the characteristics which he believed were needed by a superintendent. He quoted the late superintendent of the asylum at Aversa near Naples who said, 'The chief, if not the only medicine in an asylum, is the luminous intelligence of the person who directs it.'<sup>21</sup> How otherwise, without intelligence himself, Allen asks, can he presume to point out the errors of the mind? For his task is secretly to direct the mind without appearing to do so. He must exhibit in himself, coolness, presence of mind, prudence, patience, mildness, firmness, long suffering and forbearance, without returning insults when he receives unjustified abuse. Sudden storms of temper should not destroy a settled system of kindness and conciliation.<sup>22</sup>

During the parliamentary inquiries in 1815-16 the position of *physician* had come under criticism. Generally, physicians were men with their own private practise who spent little time with, or felt little concern for, their insane patients. Bethlem's steward, George Wallet, gave evidence to the inquiry on 8 May 1815 saying: 'Thomas Munro, the physician, attended but seldom [...] I hear he has not been around

the house but once these three months [...] He has been at the hospital more frequently but not around the gallery.'<sup>23</sup>

It had always been the aim of the new governors of the York Asylum, after 1815, to emulate the practices of The York Retreat. There the situation has been compared with the Bicêtre and Salpêtrière in Paris where the keepers and other staff had personal contact with, and responsibilities for, the patients to a far greater extent than the physician had.<sup>24</sup> This attitude towards asylum administration — a trend away from physician to layman (solidly opposed by the majority of doctors themselves) — may have been the answer to one of Dr Barnet's queries about Matthew Allen, supplying the reason as to why he never used his title of *Dr* while at the Asylum.<sup>25</sup> Dr Baldwin Wake was the appointed *physician* to the York Asylum and Allen worked under him. However, Wake lived outside the institution and Allen had full control of day to day administrative issues.

Superintendent of the mad was to become an increasingly socially accepted, though isolated, position especially for those who remained resident within the walls. In the 1820s and 30s the proprietors, or the superintendents, of small private asylums and some of the charitable institutions shared the duties of keepers or attendants, for example, Thomas Bakewell of Spring Vale private asylum in Staffordshire, or Thomas Prichard at the Northampton Lunatic Asylum, a charitable organisation. At the start of his superintendency in Northampton in 1838 Prichard had seventy patients under his care. He was able to take a personal interest in all of them. Six years later numbers had risen to two-hundred and sixty-one and it became impossible to spend time with individuals.<sup>26</sup> Both Bakewell and Prichard's wives were involved in the work of the asylums as matrons and they both had their families living on the premises. Bakewell told a Parliamentary Select Committee: 'My wife is as much a Keeper as the servants and more so.'<sup>27</sup> Thus while patient numbers remained fairly low a family atmosphere could prevail, individual attention was possible and some cures could be hoped for. A generation later the situation had completely reversed. In 1877 J. M. Granville wrote:

The circumstances of a Superintendent's wife acting as matron involves a sacrifice of social position, injurious if not fatal, to success. It is above all things indispensable that medical superintendents of asylums should be educated gentlemen; and if that is to be the case their wives cannot be matrons. Indeed it is inconceivable that a man of position and culture would allow his family to have any connection with an asylum.<sup>28</sup>

From the mid-1840s numbers of insane patients rose sharply in public asylums, and also increased under pressure of demand, in private asylums. The emphasis was on management rather than cure.

Superintendents began moving out into the community leading totally separate lives from those they treated, leaving them in the care of unqualified attendants which was generally to the patients' detriment. That Allen also eventually yielded to this trend, to move out from amongst his patients in his later years, will be shown in the following chapters.

Matthew Allen claimed from 1819 to 1824 to have been: 'Medical resident and superintendent of York Asylum.'<sup>29</sup> For several decades of this century this statement was all that was known of the Dr Allen who looked after the poet John Clare at High Beech Asylum. The records of the Asylum at York were not collected and catalogued until the 1970s and very few had attempted to read Oswald's manuscript. Thus Matthew Allen's claims remained entirely unsubstantiated. John Clare's biographers who reiterated Matthew's statement were unable to throw any further light on his background and he came to be regarded as unreliable and his claims as possibly untrue or exaggerated. In 1965 Dr Margaret Barnet, commenting on Matthew Allen's above claim that he was superintendent of the asylum, considered it a half-truth as he was, she wrote, only the apothecary and 'would have had little influence on its (the asylum's) policies.' From his appointment in 1815 until 1819, Dr Baldwin Wake the physician, also acted as superintendent.<sup>30</sup> After the appointment of a new apothecary in 1819, Dr Wake lived away from the asylum and Dr Allen was the resident, responsible for carrying out treatment, for superintending the patients, and running the institution. Verifying the claims Matthew made for himself is easily done by establishing his terms of employment required by the governors who chose him for the post. They advertised:

WANTED — An Apothecary who is to act as Superintendent of the Institution. He must not only be competent to the discharge of his Professional Duties, but also be fully qualified to be the Responsible Manager of this Establishment. He will be expected to interest himself in promoting the employment and amusement of the Patients and to devote the whole of his time<sup>2\*</sup> to the duties of his Office. He will be restricted from Private Practice and have his Board, Washing and Lodging in the House. The salary that may be expected is from £100 to £150 a year. Applications to be addressed to Mr Pyemont, York (Steward of the Asylum) for the Committee, previous to the day of the election.<sup>31</sup>

Thus we see that Allen made no claim for himself that did not fit into the tasks and responsibilities required of a superintendent of an asylum at the time. In recent years Allen's reputation has been further tarnished by unsubstantiated remarks about his character and behaviour for which there appears to be no supporting evidence. Roger Cooter describes Allen as 'an inveterate liar'<sup>32</sup> and a fast-talking, slightly eccentric [...] 'womaniser'.<sup>33</sup> Apart from his early instability and acute lack of business sense, due in part to a naïve faith

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<sup>2</sup> \*In 1835 in *Rules for Keepers* set out when Duddleston Private Asylum in Staffordshire was opened almost identical wording was used: '*engagement must be understood to be for the whole of their time.*' At this earlier date of 1819 the reformed York Lunatic Asylum by asking for total commitment to life within the walls by their employees was setting a precedent — making a requirement never made before of superintendents.

in his fellowmen,<sup>34</sup> Allen emerges from the records as a man of integrity and — apart from isolated incidents, for example, his seeming neglect of his children (see p.197) — of generally good character. Cooter's comment that Allen was a 'spendthrift' was, however, true throughout the latter's life.

### 3.1.3.2 The Election

On Saturday 10 July 1819 the Yorkshire Gazette, published the advertisement for the new position of superintendent at the York Asylum (as did all four of York's newspapers). Oswald immediately sent a copy to Matthew. Oswald's opinion was that the position was a prestigious one and in writing to Matthew said: 'Was I a single man and unprovided with a situation I should deem it a very desirable one indeed.'<sup>35</sup> He continues, in a semi-aggrieved tone:

Your professional abilities will do more for you than anything else, and I shall exhort what interests I have in York. John Wilson [a cousin, and apothecary at the County Hospital] appears very sanguine in the affair and I trust will do everything in his powers for you [...] Though you have caused me great affliction of mind [...] traducing my character, I feel the same readiness to serve you to the utmost of my powers. Yet if you shall succeed to the above appointment you ought to make up your mind to attend most closely to the discharge of your duties, and lay aside all speculation and be cautious how you deal with characters.<sup>36</sup>

Yet the account in his *Memoirs* shows Oswald to be anything but selfless and disinterested in the outcome of the appointment. He desired to show off his influence amongst his fellow citizens, he longed for his brother's grateful acknowledgement of his debt to him, and for Matthew to submit to him both as his elder, wiser and more spiritual brother, and as holder of a superior position in York society. He writes: 'Matthew's appointment [...] was secured through my exertions, influence and interest and in a manner gratifying to my feelings. Though I undertook the affair at first with many fears and considerable reluctance [...] I did not feel sanguine in stepping forward on the occasion, fearing lest in case of his appointment he should disgrace himself and his friends'.<sup>37</sup>

Oswald refers to the 'election' which was to take place to fill the post. It seemed to be the accepted manner of procedure to have backers and to mount a canvass much as one would do in a civic election today. What would be considered nepotism today seems to have been regarded as acceptable behaviour.

Oswald set to work with zeal to obtain a successful election result and without doubt to enhance his own civic standing and reputation. He was aware that other candidates were being enthusiastically promoted. There were thirty other applicants, though he names none of them, and when it came to the final decision of the governors none but Matthew was proposed. He describes what took place, giving an

account biased in his own favour, claiming that his brother's success was in no way due to his personal merit but totally due to the respect with which Oswald was held within the community:

I introduced him to the Governors in York. [...] Many tokens of respect were shown me and acknowledgements of owing his success entirely to me, as he himself was in a great measure a stranger, must have struck him, however galling it might have been to his private feelings. He has always manifested a temper of mind in this respect, the most painful and ungracious. Under all these circumstances he conducted himself with some degree of moderation and tho' evidently under some restraint. Yet he occasionally broke out in his usual rhapsody [...] My brother's age, his testimonials and my interest in York seemed to have given him a decided preference. [...] My brother was declared unanimously elected. He was called in and informed by the Archbishop of his appointment and that he had been so appointed by the high testimonials that he had produced, and more particularly by the high respectability of his brother in York.<sup>38</sup>

On Tuesday 17 August 1819 Matthew commenced his duties. Five years later when he resigned the post there were further ambiguous comments made by an indignant Oswald, whose advice Matthew had not once sought during those years at the York Asylum, and whose company and family environment his youngest brother had largely spurned. These comments will be considered later. There is no chronological account of the work of the York Asylum's apothecary/superintendent, but much can be gathered from the records of the asylum and Matthew's own book, as well as from some comments in Oswald's *Memoirs*.

### **3.1.4 Dr Matthew Allen's Years As Apothecary And Superintendent At The York Asylum**

#### **3.1.4.1 His Regular Duties**

It was one of the official duties of the superintendent to keep records of admissions, discharges and deaths. There exists at York a *Register of Cases from 1816 to 1845*. The book had been kept from an earlier date but at the time of the scandal the front of it was ripped off in an attempt to destroy evidence of abuses. This rough treatment is still evident today. It was also the superintendent's duty to provide the statistical report for the Annual General Meeting of the Governors, which was also published in the press. In the book of Annual Reports, for example, Allen stated that the average number of patients in the House from June 1820 to 1821 was one hundred and sixteen.<sup>39</sup>

Every new patient who came into Matthew Allen's care was neatly written up by him under columns entitled — name; place of origin; age; occupation; fees charged; by whom sent; temperament; length of onset of disease; state of mind on arrival; cause of disease; discharged: date and to whom, whether cured, improved or otherwise.<sup>40</sup> The diagnoses were Allen's, no doubt with help from the asylum physician, Dr Baldwin Wake.

A close study and comparison shows the state and understanding of treatment of the insane in the early 1820s. There were no medicinal cures, secret or otherwise, as Dr Hunter had maintained, or sure causes. Diagnosis and treatment were dependent on background knowledge of the case, close observations of temperament and behaviour, and gaining the confidence of the patients and calming their initial distress.

Within the York Asylum's Register of Cases 'Temperaments' recorded included *Sanguine*, *Melancholic*, *Furiously Maniacal*; 'States of mind' included *Mania*, *Imbecility* and *Dementia*; under 'Causes', *Unknown*, was most often recorded, sometimes with interesting comments which reflected current theories as to the causes of mental illness, such as *General intemperance of mind*, *Intense Study*, *Domestic Grievances*, *Diseased Consciousness* and *Coup de Soleil*.

In the privately published book *Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield, One Hundred And Fifty Years, a History* by A. L. Ashworth there is a photographic plate on page fifty-nine of a table compiled in 1838 of the causes of insanity, at the then West Riding Asylum. It is an astounding document which states fifty-five causes, some of the most bizarre being, 'Cramp, consulting wise men, and suppressed perspiration'. This last is one, which Allen agreed with, though he described it as a 'physical effect of a disordered cerebral organ', rather than a cause of insanity.<sup>41</sup>

These make an interesting comparison with the causes of mental illness found in the records at The York Retreat for approximately the same period. Anne Digby found similar and further physical causes, 'head injuries, alcoholism, organic deterioration in old age, pregnancy and childbirth, syphilis' and one case where the cause was given as 'the arrival of wisdom teeth'. Moral (psychological) causes included 'religious preoccupation, overstrain, business anxiety, disappointment in love, bereavement and sexual abuse'. She writes:

Mixed causes embraced both physical and moral factors and were often a ragbag of disparate items compiled in a desperate attempt to relate incidents recollected about a patient's life history to the outbreak of insanity. As such they should be seen more as anxious attempts to come to terms with the unknown and the inexplicable rather than confident and coherent hypotheses.<sup>42</sup>

Matthew Allen held a different view — He laid great stress on the importance of obtaining an accurate history of each patient's background, which he considered would contain vital clues to the cause of their illnesses. He commented on the sparsity of background information given about the old regime patients that he described in his case studies. He maintained that each case should be treated according to its particular cause, 'In order that we may be able to adopt the most suitable methods of counteracting their



effects [...] a part of treatment that has hitherto been wholly overlooked'.<sup>43</sup>

He saw more clearly than most that to study the history of individual cases to establish causes was valuable, not just in order to better understand what factors led to insanity, but in order to determine effective counteractive treatments. No 'general' treatment would effect a specific cause. Cause — effect — counter-effect was Allen's basic approach to all his patients. In his *Essay on the Classification of the Insane* he describes case number one hundred and ninety-five at the York Asylum, [Richard Garland] as an example of treating some one in such a way as directly counterbalanced what he considered to be the root cause of his illness.<sup>44</sup> Allen described this approach as:

More important than even Moral Treatment [...] for by it we shall be able to trace errors to their source, and without this, we can never counteract and cure them. [...] In this case it is evident a system of moral and intellectual treatment was required in order to counteract and cure the effects which had arisen out of the soil in which he had existed, very different from that which was necessary for the previous case [...] Without such knowledge it is probable that neither of these minds would ever have been restored to their balance or right state.<sup>45</sup>

This attitude was a first step in bringing to an end much of the traditional medical approach to insanity where bleeding, blistering and the administration of evacuants and emetics were routinely used, no matter what the patient's mental problem or its cause. An example of this 'standard' medical treatment was carried on at Bethlem around the time of the 1815 parliamentary enquiries. Bryan Crowther, the surgeon at that hospital had written a book in 1811 in which he described the regular bloodletting on all the patients each spring, no matter what their condition.<sup>46</sup> Professor Bynum comments:

Such indiscriminate therapy was hard to justify especially in the light of Moral Treatment, for one of its most important features, stressed by both Pinel and Tuke, was that moral therapy was individually tailored to the needs and capacities of the patient. Psychological causation is by definition a highly individual matter, and moral therapy required the therapist to know his patient far more intimately, than most medically orientated physicians apparently ever bothered to do.<sup>47</sup>

Although Allen recorded his experiences at the York Asylum in his *Essay on the Classification of the Insane* in 1837 he had worked there from 1819 to 1824. In 1828 another prominent alienist of the time who had a private practice in London and lectured to medical students, Dr Alexander Morison, published *Cases of Mental Disease* in which he came to very similar conclusions to Allen regarding diagnosis:

No general rules of mental treatment can be laid down applicable to every case. Each patient must be studied individually, in order to acquire such knowledge of his mind, as to control and operate its operations.

The most important object is to obtain full information of the patient's previous history, and particularly of the mental cause giving rise to, or at least intimately connected with, the production of the disorder. [...] Possessed of such knowledge we are better able to appreciate the phenomena of his delirium, the association of his ideas in general and the tendency of those ideas on

which his mind chiefly dwells.<sup>48</sup>

Allen's effort to establish something in his patient's background as a possible cause of insanity could sometimes have dramatic effects when the patient's problems were obviously moral or psychological. (Where there was brain damage or retardation no 'counteracting' treatment was, or is, easily to hand.) A case in point was that of George Cooke,<sup>49</sup> of whom he wrote as case number one hundred and six. Cooke a raving lunatic on admission, 'of demonic energy and eloquence', returned home eighteen months later quite normal and fully restored for the rest of his life. Details of this case will be given later.

In 1831 when Allen wrote his book *Cases of Insanity* he wrote again about the importance of discovering the cause of the insanity in individuals and stressed. 'To trace an error to its source is the best way to cure it.'<sup>50</sup> Vagueries about the influence of the mind over the body, he said, were not enough. The very direct connection had to be seen between moral behaviour and mental illness. 'In the baneful influence of vicious indulgences, intemperance, ill tempers, discontent, impatience, ambition and all ill-regulated and disproportioned stimuli and mental activity.'<sup>51</sup>

Cause and counter-cause could have been used more generally with greater success, but for the fact that delving deeply into the reason for patients' fears and fantasies ran contrary to another tenet of moral treatment. Samuel Tuke in his description of the York Retreat wrote:

There have been few instances in which by some striking evidence the maniac has been driven from his favourite absurdity; but it has uniformly been succeeded by another equally irrational. In regard to melancholics conversation on the subject of their despondency is found to be highly injudicious. The very opposite method is pursued. Every means is taken to seduce the mind from its favourite but unhappy musings by bodily exercise, walks, conversations, reading and other innocent recreations.<sup>52</sup>

Distraction, useful as it was, did not open the way to revealing causes and suggesting useful counter-actions. Allen's methods were to be justified, only when suppression by the unconscious came to be accepted nearly a century later. Allen's efforts to establish causes of mental aberration were above all limited by the time he could spend with individuals. At York, with over a hundred patients, only certain individuals, such as Cooke and Garland above, benefited in this way from his care.

Allen developed his views on the causes and treatment of insanity over the following years. At York his movement away from the old regime's attitude of treating insanity in a general manner, to finding and treating the causes in individuals, was a major step forward. Fourteen years later, in his last published

article on insanity,<sup>53</sup> he explained how he still held to his original views on establishing causes: 'We must have the most accurate knowledge of all the features in the character of the insane', (58) but had developed his ideas still further in line, not with British alienists, the majority of whom believed solely in physical causes of insanity, but with Continental opinion which supported moral causation. For the sake of completeness these later developments in Allen's theory are discussed here.

In Allen's address to the Anthropological Society, "What Is Truth?" in 1838, he spoke first of the necessity of establishing a fixed principle of generalisation which would become of universal use and application in the study of insanity. He believed that correct views of the human mind would in time reveal this principle. In the present state of research only the effects of insanity and not its causes were being treated. He is nevertheless optimistic with regard to medical research and urges concentration on the study of the mind and its maladies. Let, he says, as Pinel desired, the highest talents be put to use in this study. Allen quotes Lord Bacon: 'It is necessary to study the mind in its insane and disturbed state, to discover and understand the nature of mind itself.' Agreeing with Bacon, he notes: 'It is by studying nature in a state of disturbance, that we may be enabled to establish the true principles of philosophy.'(52)

Allen expresses a belief that mental illness will be curable: 'Restoration to sanity is now much more the object than [is] confinement.'(53) His reference is to the previous practice of confinement of the *old regime*. Within two decades the emphasis on confinement rather than restoration would have returned. He was himself practising within a window of time when reasons for optimism existed. However, he admits that the medical literature of the time has produced more false facts than theories.(53) In particular he finds the recent books of Drs Burrows and Crichton unsatisfactory.<sup>54</sup> Burrow's book, 'Is a crude compilation of unacknowledged but valuable materials in a very uncouth dress; and the whole work evinces an utter state of mental destitution in the powers of profound and philosophical reflection', while Crichton's is, 'full of the spirit of philosophy and stands in this respect alone'. Yet, 'Like Hill's work', Allen inexplicably deems it, 'Not calculated for general use'.(54). These, he says, fall into the common trap of mistaking effects for causes and all, without exception, are defective in that which he considers 'a desideratum in medical literature, viz. fixed principles of generalisation'.(54) There are two sets of opinion regarding the causes of insanity, one advocating that moral causes are most common, and the other that physical causes are so. No one denies the reciprocity of one on the other but the question is — which has priority? (54)

After giving a brief description of Dr Combe's (presumably Andrew Combe's) book<sup>55</sup> and his:

'Excellent chapter on the predisposing causes of mental derangement',<sup>(55)</sup> Allen then emphasises: 'It is this view which I am anxious to explain, for no maxim in medicine or in morals is of more importance than this, that to trace errors to their source, is the first step in order to our being able to cure them.'<sup>(55)</sup> He is unequivocal that every cause of insanity is directly or indirectly a moral one. A view, which he believes, is held more by Continental alienists than by British ones who generally favour physical causes. He describes the views of Félix Voisin, a chief alienist at the Bicêtre, and author of *Des Causes Morales et Physiques des Maladies Mentales*, Paris, 1826.<sup>56</sup> Voisin sees the cause of insanity as a moral or psychological factor, directly affecting the brain and not arising from any other source or disease. He, according to Allen, endeavours to prove that even those causes previously considered physical: 'such as suppression of evacuants, parturition, critical periods, are all consecutive to moral or mental affection [...] which itself, opened the door for the translation of these physical causes to the brain.'<sup>(55)</sup> Allen also mentions another French author, Fabret, [*sic*]<sup>57</sup> who was Voisin's partner at Vanvres and published a work on insanity seeking to demonstrate that physical disorders of the body, e.g. the stomach, which have been considered direct causes of insanity were themselves, in the first instance, the consequence of some moral derangement, and not the cause producing them.<sup>58</sup> (55)

Allen emphatically supports these views and their importance for the future treatment of insanity; he sees them as 'the Morality of Medicine':

Could we see the consequences of indulging in any excess [...] and of keeping up in ourselves and each other an improper and painful state of mind, we should appear to ourselves suicides and murderers [...] What we call the causes of insanity, are but the matches applied to a magazine of combustibles ready to explode; a chronic inflammatory state produced by excess. (56)

Given the importance of these views, Allen is amazed by the attitude of British alienists; their lack of knowledge and interest in these matters and their failure to participate in the debate over the moral or physical causes of insanity. He castigates some 'flippant writers', whom he does not name, for their 'shallow witty sarcasm', and: 'one of our most voluminous authors, or rather compilers'. This individual [unnamed] claims: 'There is no consecutive connection between the cause producing insanity and the effects produced.'<sup>(56)</sup>

Allen, himself, makes a bid to settle the continental dispute. He saw the ability to define a subject as proof of accurate knowledge concerning it. Both knowledge and definition regarding insanity were lacking. He first mentions the defective definitions that have hitherto been given of insanity resulting in

defective methods of classification, for example by such people as Dr Thomas Arnold with his divisions of insanity into 'sensation' and 'reflection' and then into numerous species and varieties, which result in utter confusion instead of simplification. Drs Burrows and Conolly he quotes, the former: "A definition suitable to every form of insanity is an *ignis fatuus*<sup>3</sup>\* in medical philosophy [...] which eludes and bewilders pursuit," and the latter, who said that definitions were "so numerous and unsatisfactory that no useful object could be obtained in stating them." Conolly's own definition, Allen added, 'we are prepared to prove, is quite as objectionable as the rest'.(57) Classification has been vague and in error. For example, though usually classified as different, melancholia and mania arise equally from over excitement and hyperactivity, — from an excitement of feelings which may depress or may exhilarate, depending on the circumstances or personality of the individual patient. Allen's own views can be summarised as follows:

Something much more comprehensive of the origin and nature of mental disease must be included in our definition. We must have accurate knowledge of the character of the insane patient, a history of his internal mental states, the secret history of the whole mind and we must trace out the hereditary history of the stock from which the patient comes.<sup>59</sup> Without this there is a high risk of false deductions. (58)

We need to know in depth the reciprocal influence that mind and matter have over each other — 'We must above all, understand how the mind operates, by and through the brain, with the internal world'.(58) He then enlarges on 'How the mind acts on the brain'.(58) Without a knowledge of these actions, he claims, it is impossible to understand the causes which produce disease and 'we shall be liable to mistake effects for causes, and be at sea forever without a pilot to direct us'.(58)

He gives a phrenological definition of the brain as the organ of the mind with parts devoted to different offices with specific functions. These parts may be subject to disordered action. In health each part has its relative share of activity. This is reversed in cases of insanity. Power over excess excitement or to command a dormant faculty is lost. It is at this point that he introduces The Grand Universal Principle or power which works through the nervous energy ('An influence or modification of the power that works everywhere.' (109)) upon the brain. He emphasises that the faculties of the brain, the instruments or organs are the medium through which the agent of mind and body carries on its operations which, though from the same power, differ in result according to the media used. In disease it is the nervous energy communicating through the appointed medium of body and soul, 'and their instrumentality between the external and internal world which is at fault'.(110) The power itself consists neither in the organ nor instrument, nor in

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<sup>3</sup> \*Literally *Foolish Fire*. Willow-the-Wisp phosphorescent light seen on marshy ground. Used symbolically to mean

the agent, but in an intelligent Principle which directs operations.(112) He again repeats that we are constantly mistaking effects for causes. This power he makes synonymous with the soul: 'It is equally erroneous to call the nerve fibres the power, though they are the direct and proximate media of the soul's connexion with all the subordinate physical operations in the function of life.'(112)

It is at this point that Allen's argument, which had given some promise of producing a concrete advance in the understanding of the causes of insanity falters, becomes speculative and extremely difficult to follow:

When this power has been altered in its state by some cause, which deranges its regular action, we have symptoms which indicate the nature of the derangement. [...] As an example; suppose the application of cold, combined with any depressing passion or exhausted state of mind or body, we have derangement or disorder in its function of outward excretions, and the due escape along with the matter of perspiration is prevented [...] thus is not only an additional quantity thrown into the interior parts of the system, but it is thrown in, in an altered and dangerous state, and it is thrown in along with the morbid and excrementitious matter of perspiration [...] all this is further modified by the state of the atmosphere, prevailing epidemics, as well as the constitution of the person affected, produce(s) corresponding and specific diseases.(114)

Allen was not alone in believing that suppression of evacuants led to insanity. The idea was held by many at the time. He would have done better not to have incorporated some physical phenomenon as a resulting symptom of moral causes. Explanations such as he gives were often given in support of physical causes of insanity. Thus he undermines his own argument greatly weakening his theories. That *some*, we presume, moral cause should result in the suppression of perspiration by the body has a very tenuous link and that this in turn should result in insanity is, to say the least, incredible. A very high temperature leading to death would be a more tenable result. We are ultimately left unconvinced about what he believes is true, that insanity has, at its base, moral causes. Allen's success with moral treatment is, in the end, more convincing that insanity has moral causes than any other evidence he offers.

It was the task of the superintendent to provide means of occupation or amusement for the entire variety of inmates, with the purpose of removing friction amongst them, reducing boredom, and preventing them becoming melancholic or allowing their minds to regress into a torpid state. Practitioners of moral management believed that distraction was needed to draw their thoughts away from the pain, fear or anger that had first caused their mental state. Rather than bringing them face to face with their problems the mad were to be given other things to think about.

It was also Allen's duty to foster a family atmosphere. The governors insisted that the lessons learnt from The Retreat should be built into the system after 1815. Previously patients had not been kept occupied. Now suitable work was apportioned to them. Two old regimers, in good physical condition but in a 'childish and torpid state of mind', whom Allen describes as 'Poor Automata' were made workers in the garden.<sup>60</sup> Another 'Neat, clean, crabbed looking middle aged woman', who 'When provoked was exceedingly abusive' was found to be 'Useful as a laundress'.<sup>61</sup> James Boot who had been admitted in 1801,<sup>62</sup> and kept naked on loose straw, as he was said to be a violent maniac, was now of less dirty habits though 'his mind was irrevocably gone'. Motionless and silent: 'He helped about the wash house'.<sup>63</sup> Another, probably Susan Ellis,<sup>64</sup> once a charwoman and admitted in 1806 was: 'Wild, extravagant and boastful [...] always taking the role of a male — General, Lord Mayor, King etc. She has got worse and less helpful in the laundry'.<sup>65</sup> Another is 'agreeable and useful in the House'.<sup>66</sup> All these were obviously working-class patients but were not seen merely as a means of cheap labour. In their previous lives before entering the asylum, they were used to household duties and working with their hands. The labour they were now encouraged to do was to bring back to them a sense of normality, a feeling of being needed and useful and to encourage a community spirit. Allen was to speak in later years of cricket matches amongst his patients. Outdoor games in which this class of patient could participate were not mentioned as part of life at the York Asylum. Walking out into the town seemed to be the chief recreational activity.

There were those who were not of the class or temperament to be occupied only with physical or menial tasks. One or two, mentioned by Allen, were Cambridge graduates. One (either Luke Gozna or Francis Gordon)<sup>67</sup> had been 'a superintendent of police in Bombay and had with him in the House two trunks of books'. His mind, however, was mostly occupied with solving the national debt, speculations upon which had evidently caused his insanity. Another was a surgeon and lecturer of some repute who suffered from delusions. Allen occupied him intellectually: 'I undertook to make him translate a French work while I wrote from his dictation. We nearly finished an important medical work together — he was much improved by the exercise. I was obliged to discontinue it — he relapsed into his former state.'<sup>68</sup>

Edward Horsman was admitted in 1803 when he was twenty-eight.<sup>69</sup> Allen describes him as a proud, passionate, spoiled child who had failed to gain a position in the East Indies and was reduced to managing a farm. He became passionate and violent and despite the fact that he was chained for many years, 'Had retained a considerable portion of his mind'. He wrote a journal with many reflections on general subjects. 'He is a dark, cadaverous looking man whose proud, gaunt figure is known throughout

the house. He uses quantities of snuff, reads the newspapers and is fond of whist.' <sup>70</sup>

Full reform of the system had not taken place even at York and Allen freely admits to using the swinging chair with some difficult and obdurate patients. <sup>71</sup> Although the Chair was a physical deterrent, affecting the patient's body, its desired result was moral, working as a deterrent in the patient's mind. <sup>72</sup> According to C. Milnes-Gaskell in his *Passages in the History of the York Asylum* the Chair which was used in the asylum at that time was Dr Darwin's Circulating Swing, an engraving of which is given in *Practical Observations on the Causes and Cure of Insanity* by Dr W. S. Hallaran. <sup>73</sup> 'It was capable of being revolved at one hundred times per minute, one of whose usual effects seems to have been a smart fever of eight or ten days duration.' <sup>74</sup> No sooner recommended, this type of treatment went entirely out of fashion. Allen states four specific occasions on which he used the Swing for punishment but then adds a footnote: 'I have never used the Swing since sixteen years ago. It is now, under better management, wholly unnecessary and worse than useless.' <sup>75</sup> Hallaran's book was published in 1818 and acquired by the York Medical Library in 1819. No one could accuse Allen of using out of date methods. He became a member of this library in October 1819 and was its curator in 1820. <sup>76</sup> He seems to have added books to the library and used them to improve his own knowledge of modern techniques and treatments which, where appropriate, he put into practice. Examples of this can be seen in this chapter where he used ideas from W. S. Hallaran, G. M. Burrows and Thomas Forster and quoted from John Haslam.

#### 3.1.4.2 Beyond The Call of Duty

The records of the asylum for that time give us small indications here and there of some of the other duties of the superintendent. On 9 April, 1821 Proceedings of the Committee: 'Resolved that Mr Allen shall undertake the charge of bringing Mr Fraser [...] from Edinburgh Asylum'. <sup>77</sup> The task was a responsible one, and no doubt not particularly pleasant, but Matthew Allen would have rejoiced that, of all places, his duty took him to Edinburgh, where he could combine business with pleasure.

In a rough notebook, used by Allen and his successor, which contained lists of patients admitted and discharged from June 1823 onwards, a comment highlights Allen's genuine interest in, and enthusiasm for, his work. The entry states: 'Elizabeth Britch from Scruton near Bedale sent by Mr A Campbell, Surgeon, Bedale — Corresponded with him.' <sup>78</sup> This sort of concern about a case supports the more self-conscious statements in Allen's books which indicate a compassion for his patients which went beyond the call of duty. Allen developed a close relationship with some of his patients and wrote of one: 'When



however a change of state occurred I felt so interested for his trembling and doubtful situation that I even had a bed put up for him in my own room.' In considering the position of keepers and assistants in the early asylums of the nineteenth-century L. D. Smith commented: 'In the private asylums their quarters would also normally join those of the patients'.<sup>79</sup> This makes Allen's action fairly unexceptional (though adjoining rooms and one's own room are different). However, as in much of what he did, his enlightened actions and attitudes were very early (1821 in this case) and set a precedent rather than following an established pattern. 'I had always some case of this kind about me, and no one can conceive the sacrifice of health and comfort it cost me.'<sup>80</sup>

A prime concern of Matthew Allen was the spiritual welfare of those in his care. He started working at the asylum in August 1819 and on 4 September 1819 he began to address sermons to the patients and staff each Sunday. He very soon collected his addresses into a volume, *Lectures on the Temper and Spirit of the Christian Religion*, the first edition of which was published by Baldwin, Craddock and Joy of Paternoster Row, London, in 1821. Barnet, in her analysis, was sceptical about these sermons: 'The reader might be persuaded into thinking that Allen was a deeply religious man. A cynic might doubt their attribution if he were aware that the Reverend James Allen had written sermons and essays with very similar titles many years earlier.'<sup>81</sup> However, in the light of the earlier chapters of this thesis and Matthew's violent disagreements with his father and brother over theological and devotional matters it is more likely (and was also Oswald's opinion) that what Matthew wrote was rather more in opposition to, than in favour with, his late father's opinions.

In the advertisement to the second edition reprint in 1834 Matthew wrote:

These lectures were written originally without any view to publication but simply as moral addresses to the milder and convalescent class of patients as well as the domestic servants in York Asylum [...] The only peculiarity they possess is that from the circumstances in which I was then placed I felt it necessary to abstain from all doctrinal and spiritual views.<sup>82</sup>

Later Allen gave the reason for his avoidance of matters of doctrine which, from his early experiences, he knew could be so controversial. It seems that he had fears of criticism from the governors for pushing his religious views. They would have seen him, at this point, as at least a dissenter with independent views, if not as a Sandemanian; though by this stage he had definitely left the latter views behind. In his *Essay on the Classification of the Insane* he wrote:

I had purposely avoided all doctrinal points, although doctrinal views may, when properly presented, be the best preventatives, and in some cases the best medicine in the cure of insanity; but

the circumstances in which I was at that time placed appeared to forbid even their most cautious introduction, and were scarcely admissible to an audience consisting of some of almost all denominations.<sup>83</sup>

He also noted in his *Lectures* that he thought himself the first person ever to preach regularly to the insane. This was not actually true, others had previously made varied attempts and by 1820 services were being regularly conducted in some places.<sup>84</sup> Allen surely knew that he was not the first to bring spiritual comfort to his own patients. For earlier in that same year, 1819, Samuel Tuke had 'Frequently visited the (York Lunatic)Asylum to collect such of the patients as (were)tolerably quiet and (read) to them a portion of the Scriptures'. A visitor who escorted him wrote: 'About thirty assembled this afternoon. One of the patients at Samuel Tuke's suggestion, sang one of Watt's hymns, with a melody and sweetness of voice not surpassed by anything of the kind I have ever heard.'<sup>85</sup>

Allen's purpose was to persuade his listeners into new trains of feeling and reflection and by gaining their attention to encourage their minds to concentrate on external things. 'My object was not to be incessantly teasing and irritating them by always speaking at them. [...] I was studiously anxious to avoid the direct appearance of doing so'.<sup>86</sup> When the sermons were published his brother, Oswald, extremely scornful of them wrote:

The Lectures which he has lately published I consider as a very distressing proof of his unscriptural and Latitudinarian principles, corrupting the great doctrines of the everlasting Gospel by the introduction of chiefly a mere system of Platonic Philosophy. Surely he has not yet known the Truth, otherwise he could never talk so diametrically opposite to it. The title of his book as well as the dedication is to me highly exceptionable. The Lectures in a moral point of view are loosely and incorrectly put together and abound too much in Egotism and quotations, and some of the most trifling description, and his introduction of political opinions is ill judged. The various measures and stratagems to which he has had recourse to puff off and sell his work, even too glaring not to be observed and ridiculed. He has naturally good abilities but he has neither had application nor perseverance to qualify himself to become an author without consulting some literary friend.<sup>87</sup>

The dedication was as follows and reflected his hope for the wider influence of what he had written:

To the different parties which exist in Politics and Religion in this empire the following short lectures [...] are, from a sincere desire to allay, if possible the differences between them and to present them, with one common spirit to unite them, and to give their enthusiasm a good and determinate direction, inscribed by their well-wisher and humble servant — MA — 15 August 1820.<sup>88</sup>

He had in fact written to Thomas Carlyle about them and received his encouragement.<sup>89</sup> And after their publication in August 1820 Carlyle was eager to assist in their promotion: 'As for the Christian Lectures if my influence were anything [...] I would most cheerfully lend it [...] both for the sake of its author and the Public, which labouring at present under a hot fever, needs anodynes more than ought else. Have you sent copies to all the reviewers, magazine editors and others of that tribe?'<sup>90</sup> Carlyle added that they would

discuss his book further when they met in York.

The sermons were not unscriptural, as they were a series based on the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 5 verses 3 to 9 — *The Beatitudes* — from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Latitudinarian — one who regards specific creeds, methods of church government etc. with indifference — they were indeed. Oswald saw this as a term of disgrace but it partly sums up the very material of the sermons and shows how far Matthew had moved from his Sandemanian roots. Like his father before him, Matthew took for granted the authority of the Scriptures; the matter was never in dispute. But unlike his father on the one hand, and the established church on the other, he was adamant that the only other authority relevant to his hearers was their own consciences. No one, he wrote, should be forced to sign up to any creeds, laws or practices before being accepted as a Christian, and the individual conscience alone, in the light of Biblical teaching, dictated what actions were necessary to express the Christian faith. It can be safely said therefore that by 1820, when he preached and published his sermons, Matthew was no longer a Sandemanian. Whether his introduction of political views was ill judged is a matter of opinion. However, his politics were not of any party persuasion.

Allen preached most weeks, sometimes every other Sunday and occasionally with longer breaks, until 24 July 1821, working through each beatitude in the following manner:

Lecture 1 — General observations on the Sermon on the Mount.

Lectures 2-4 on Verse 3: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven', entitled, *On Humility of Mind*.

Lectures 5 and 6 on verse 4: 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted', entitled, *Advantages of Affliction to the Mind*.

Lectures 7-8 on verse 5, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth', entitled, *On the happiness of a mild temper, and a mind possessing self-control*.

Lectures 9-11 on verse 6 'Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled', entitled *The necessity of possessing the most eager desire to improve the heart and understanding*.

Lectures 12-16 on verse 7, 'Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy', entitled, *On Benevolence*.

Lectures 17-26 on verse 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God', entitled, *On purity of Heart*. Included in this at the end of lecture 22 is a moving, *Prayer for the Penitent*. The last two lectures

under this heading are *The Importance of Early Education*. (For a detailed description of their content see p.199)

Allen's final Lecture, 27, was on St. Matthew 5:9 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God', entitled, *On Universal Peace*. There is no reason given anywhere why he never preached on the final beatitude in Matt.5:10 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake'.

The second edition was published in 1831 with the addition of two more sermons 'on Blessed are the Peacemakers' printed as one and entitled *On Christian Forbearance*. This 1831 volume had the title *Devotional Lectures on the Graces, Purity, Strength And Happiness of the Christian Character*. In 1834 the Second Edition was brought out again with the original title *Lectures on the Temper and Spirit of the Christian Religion — with Additions*. A thirty-three-page preface is found in the 1821 edition only, as also the above dedication. The later publications had a short 'advertisement' in the front by Allen who quoted from Lord Bacon with a comment from 'the excellent' Basil Montagu whose *Life of Lord Bacon*, Montagu had recently completed.<sup>91</sup>

The Preface of the first edition explains further the origin of the sermons which were: 'Written on the Sunday forenoons and delivered in the afternoon of the same day'. The only aid to which Allen turned at the time were the published lectures of the Reverend James Brewster 'To which I am indebted [...] for first exciting and setting my own ideas afloat on this subject'. Brewster, a Church of Scotland minister in Edinburgh, who was later to be one of those who seceded into the Free Church of Scotland, wrote *Lectures upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, in 1809. It is more than likely that Allen, during his student days, had heard Brewster preach and had at that time purchased his book, which later, in 1821, was ready at hand for him to consult. This shows that Allen, when first in Edinburgh, and supposedly still of the Sandemanian persuasion, had had no qualms about visiting other congregations and buying books from 'heretics'. Already, by his early days in Edinburgh, he was, it seems, willing to think for himself and open to other than Sandemanian opinion. Allen also notes the influence of his own surroundings at the York Asylum, on what he preached: 'I must acknowledge that many of my reflections, if they were not suggested, received a colouring from occurrences in this place.'<sup>92</sup>

There is nothing unorthodox in his sermons. He tends to stress the unbiblical and unchristian nature of exclusivity and dissension in the Church. He is against judgmental attitudes and, as has been stated above, stresses the liberty of the Christian conscience. The Christian character described by the

Lord's sermon required self-control in its development and this he particularly encouraged in his congregation who, already under moral treatment, were learning individual management of their own behaviour.

In the preface to the first edition of his book, which was not part of what he addressed to his congregation, Allen writes about insanity itself and the influence of religion upon it. 'I am of the opinion that proper views of religion are the best preventatives and the best remedies, in many [...] cases of mental alienation [...] my views on the subject agree [...] completely with those of Dr Burrows, who recently published his judicious remarks upon this delicate subject.'<sup>93</sup> Allen also recognises that religious fanaticism can be a forerunner to insanity:

A spirit of vapouring pride and controversy [...] on some doctrinal points, has a greater share in producing insanity than seems probable to some. At all events, this spirit, instead of being religion is its very opposite; it excites the worst passions of the human heart, and it prepares and fertilises the soil in which they are prone to grow of their own accord; it should therefore be most carefully and constantly guarded against, and repressed and eradicated where it does exist, by every mild and gentle means in our power.<sup>94</sup>

As well as his own experience he saw the evidence of religious and other fanaticism around him everyday in the asylum.

In 1824, William Ellis at The West Riding Asylum wrote concerning his spiritual ministry to his patients: 'It may indeed, without fear of contradiction, be affirmed, that, during the six years that the system has been adopted, it has been so far from producing any evil effect, that it has uniformly tended to soothe the mind and give consolation to the unhappy sufferers.'<sup>95</sup>

Allen had, he said, read George Mann Burrow's newly published book, which dealt in two of its sections with religion and lunacy.<sup>96</sup> Section IX asks the question 'Is Religion a Cause or an Effect of Insanity?' (171) Burrows comes to roughly the same conclusions as Allen that religion is at times the best solution to the problems of insanity and at other times, when badly applied, it simply aggravates the lunatic's condition. In section X Burrows looks at 'The Efficacy of Religious Instruction'.(222) He warns against taking on the task without experience and of the necessity of having an intimate knowledge of every patient's state of mind. Allen could have had neither of these when he started to preach at the York Asylum. Burrows, who viewed preaching 'as a powerful auxiliary in aiding recovery', (226) advises that the responsibility, whether or not to allow preaching and to whom, should be 'Left to the accuracy of the superintendent's discriminating powers'.(226) He will, he writes, find no task 'Requiring so much tact and

discretion as that of administering spiritual advice to the inmates of an asylum'.(226) He advises that spiritual counsel ought preferably to be 'Administered segregately through the medium of private communication'.(229) His warnings of the dangers were clear: 'Were it to be attempted without the nicest discrimination of individual cases, where the understanding of one would be restored, many would be irretrievably alienated.'(232)

Allen on reading such a text could have reacted with caution and left the task to someone of experience, or he could have taken it as a challenge, feeling he, despite his inexperience, was the man for the task. Burrows concluded by saying: 'Religious instruction must in the first instance be tried as an experiment.'(232) Allen, who would undoubtedly have seen these words as a challenge, went ahead with the experiment immediately, involving a large gathering of patients and staff. The experiment fortunately seems to have been a success, as the experience of one patient at the York Asylum seems to indicate.

Just as Allen was coming to the end of his series on the beatitudes a patient was admitted to the asylum who suffered from a prime example of mania which had developed out of religious controversy. He later described this patient:

No.106 [Mr George Cooke]<sup>97</sup> admitted 11 April 1820 aged 65. He was a Dissenting Minister who entertained a gloomy view of religion. Zealous, violent and vindictive — a mind with every opposite quality in excess [...] He was always in a state of irregular and discordant excitation. State of the most furious mania [...] for some weeks without ceasing [...] even at a distance his voice sounded like a river escaping from some narrowed part — raving furiously on his favourite doctrine of Election, or rather blasphemous doctrine of Reprobation.<sup>98</sup>

When this man had become calmer and was overwhelmed with despair at his own state and the recollection of the things he had said, Allen gave him his set of Sermons (still in manuscript) to read, which he did with great pleasure. Allen continues: 'His cure seemed to depend on the proper administration of counteractive views and all depended on the judicious mode of stating these sounder views [...] He recovered and returned home the September following.'<sup>99</sup>

It can be assumed that Allen's regular Sunday afternoon preaching continued throughout his time at the York Asylum, though we have no record of the content of further sermons. When at High Beech, Allen adopted the common Victorian practice of family prayers each evening, which were also attended by convalescent patients and staff. A witness to this was George Swire, Allen's publisher and friend, who said: 'Dr Allen delivered enlightened, interesting but plain, familiar and affectionate discourses.'<sup>100</sup> It was a legal requirement of the Visiting Commissioners in Lunacy after 1828 that provision be made for the

insane to attend an act of weekly worship. The Essex minute book of the Visiting Commissioners gives ample testimony that patients at High Beech who, where fit enough, were allowed to go to the parish church or to the regular services held by Dr Allen within the asylum. The choice was voluntary. Summing up the effect of preaching to the insane Allen said it was 'like oil thrown on a stormy sea', and the moral consequences far exceeded his own expectations.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.1.4.3. Insanity, The Weather and Natural Cycles — Allen's Interest in Meteorology

The Royal Meteorological Society, founded in 1850, grew out of the London Meteorological Society which had begun in 1823. It was during the latter year, while he was at the York Asylum that Allen submitted a paper to be read at the Leeds Lit. & Phil. society entitled *The Effects of Atmospheric Changes on Health and Spirits*. Unfortunately no membership lists are extant for the London Meteorological Society so it is not possible to ascertain whether or not Allen was a founder member. By 1831 however, when his book *Cases of Insanity* was published he described himself as a corresponding member of the Meteorological Society of London.

The question of the effects of the weather on insane patients was not original to Allen. Others such as W. S. Hallaran made similar observations. Thomas Forster's book *Observations on the Casual and Periodical Influence of Particular States of the Atmosphere on Human Health and Diseases, particularly Insanity* was published in 1817 and was newly acquired by the York Medical Library when Allen became its curator in 1820. Forster dedicated his work to Dr Spurzheim<sup>102</sup> with whom he had personally discussed the subject. Spurzheim had merely commented in his published work that changes appeared to take place in general diseases and insanity according to season, weather, day and night and that the subject deserved investigation.<sup>103</sup> The subject obviously appealed to Allen and he consequently wrote his paper about it and later dealt with it in his book *Cases of Insanity: With Medical Moral and Philosophical Observations and Essays upon them*. No modern discussion of the subject, or comment on the early nineteenth-century interest in it, appears to have been published; though Forster's emphasis on periodicity could be compared with late twentieth-century interest in biorhythms<sup>4</sup>. He remarked that the casual and periodical influence of the atmosphere on the human body has been observed from the time of the ancient Greeks. He himself had long observed external influences on the function of the brain and the nerves. Repeated observation of

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4 \*Physiological, emotional and intellectual rhythms or cycles, supposed to cause variations in mood or performance. 'Our minds, bodies and emotions are governed by three natural cycles, known as biorhythms. Once we realize how we are affected, we can plan our lives accordingly, so that we take advantage of our peaks of energy and exercise special caution on "critical" days.'

outside stimuli, such as electrical storms, can enable us to guard against their effects. In some cases patients can be prepared against it with medicine.

Forster noted the casual effects of weather changes, but also the regular periodical influence occurring, he said, twice in the course of twenty-eight days, during which symptoms of insanity became more intense. Epileptics for example suffered more frequent or severe fits. For the healthy, periodic irritability occurs only once in the month and is of a trifling and short duration. It, however, does lessen the capacity and relish for intellectual activity. The melancholic are the more seriously affected and suicides more numerous during periods of irritability. As well as monthly patterns there are also diurnal periods which occur every second, third or fourth day, with the worst paroxysms during the time of the monthly period. These will be regular but different in each patient, some suffering most in the evening, others in the morning or at noon. Careful observation and record taking can establish individual patterns and thus patients can be treated according to individual need. Annual periods also occur, which, while they last, are worst during the monthly periods of influence. He makes no distinction between the effects of the atmosphere on men and women.

Forster backed up his observations with parallel studies of nature and observed periods of irritability in plants and animals. He denied that he had indulged in theoretical speculation and said that he based his claims on observation only. Further patterns, Forster argues, can be found in the study of patients with intermittent mania. As the term of the attack diminishes, delusive ideas are only felt during the few days of the monthly period. Forster encouraged his readers to keep detailed journals of such data, which would, he suggested, if compared and published, bring the facts to public attention. The importance of periodicity and the effects on treatment would hopefully then become clear. Allen followed this suggestion and began his own observations and record keeping among the many old, chronic cases at that time in the York Asylum. Forster also suggested that the periodicity of epidemic diseases might be influenced by atmospheric conditions. *Practical Observations on Insanity* by W.S. Hallaran, mentioned above, also commented on periodicity in chronic cases:

Chronic insanity is that form of the disease which having passed through the acute and convalescent stages has assumed the more permanent character, and is known by the frequent exacerbation of the original accession, also finally under circumstances less violent and with symptoms subacute in relation to the primary affection [...]

There are few practitioners of the most ordinary discernment who will not feel themselves disposed to acknowledge, that cases of insanity, precisely of this form, compose the majority of those committed to his care [...] that these paroxysms are for the most part periodical in their approach, that though of shorter duration, they continue pertinaciously unyielding.<sup>104</sup>



Finally, a decade later, when Allen read a book published in 1831 by James Kennedy MRCs on the subject of cholera epidemics,<sup>105</sup> with which his own record keeping and research on periodicity seemed to agree, he went ahead and had his own work, *Cases of Insanity*, published.

The book consists of three sections all exploring the same theme — atmospheric effects on people, the sane, the chronic insane and those who are victims of epidemics. The first and the third sections of the book are the case histories of twenty-two, elderly, chronically insane patients who had been at the York Asylum when Allen became superintendent there in 1819. (Some of these cases were presented again in the first section of his textbook, *Essay on the Classification of the Insane* which he published in 1837.) Most of the cases include phrenological information which confirms the patients' temperaments, explains their eccentricities and indicates the direction which treatment should take. In some of these cases idiosyncrasies are described which Allen claimed became exacerbated by atmospheric changes. The central section of the book has seven parts:

An essay on the influence of the atmosphere on animal spirits containing:

- How atmospheric influence is modified among the insane, and the application of this knowledge.
- On lunar influence.
- On the influence of the seasons.
- On diurnal influence.
- On planetary influence
- Concluding remarks on atmospheric influence and on cholera morbus, with quotes from Dr James Kennedy's recently published book.

Allen is conscious of the speculative and unproven nature of what he writes and states that the real ending of the essay is on page seventy five and that all that follows i.e. from, *On Lunar Influence*, onwards is an appendage. His style of writing is hard to follow. Sentences are often a full page in length and require repeated reading before the import can be grasped. This book, though speculative about the effects of weather, the moon and the planets — Allen freely admits the need for more observation and research on such matters — gives a lot of insight, from parenthetical passages, into Allen's ideas on the treatment of the insane. He discusses at length his thoughts on asylum superintendents and on causes of insanity. For these comments see under the appropriate heading in chapter III above.

He generally agrees with Forster and accepts that weather changes, changes in air pressure,

increased humidity, high winds, exceptionally dry weather, storms and electrical activity have broad effects. Some examples which he gives are: painful sensations in old wounds, an increase in the rapidity of fermentation in brewing and bread making, rapid growth in vegetation, increase of effluvia in filthy ditches and an unsettled state amongst the sick. He believes that at such times alterations take place in our vital functions and in our animal spirits.<sup>106</sup> As in all his books Allen backs up such conclusions with long footnotes from other published sources. Here he quotes from *Natural Prognostics of the Weather* by M. Waldeck and Sir Humphry Davy's *Prognostics of the Weather*.

Allen was also in agreement that changes in atmospherics affected the insane and that those who were excited became more so, exhibiting an awakened and unsettled stir of the spirits, that melancholy deepened and attempted suicides increased. He says that he agrees with Dr John Mason Good: 'That diseases whether mental or corporeal are products of disordered vitality [...] in cases of insanity the vital energies are in an altered state [...] sufficient to account for the general, and erratic and uncertain display of the animal spirits, when increased or diminished by atmospheric changes.'<sup>107</sup> Allen quotes as an example, case no 7, admitted in 1792 (whom he described in section one of the book) saying: 'I have been able to trace the process and progress of these changes from small beginnings to their present state'(page 52). However, he disagreed with Dr Hallaran, quoted above, that changes in the weather and atmospheric disturbance led to 'A new accession or exacerbation of their disease'.

As in his essays *On Chemical Philosophy* Allen vigorously maintains the view that, 'Everything depends on one power operating through all things and that the diversity of the operations and phenomena is caused through the different media through which it operates.'<sup>(18)</sup> Thus he says that the subtle shift of mental and physical organisation found in all the old, chronic insane patients results in a modified reaction to atmospheric changes compared with those seen in the average healthy person. In the old chronic cases both mind and manner are effected. They lack control under normal conditions, so that at times of atmospheric change their aberrations are exacerbated, and become more obvious to the observer. This is, however, not to be interpreted as Dr Hallaran would have it, as the remains of the disease, in the state of a returning paroxysm.<sup>(48)</sup>

Their insanity is of a periodic nature without any added atmospheric exacerbation. Over excitement, due to an imagined importance of their ideas, followed by exhaustion and depression, being oft repeated, leads to an increase in strength and duration of their paroxysms. The process becomes habitual and periodic. The doctor in charge of the patient needs to guard against the mistaking of the simple,

though modified, changes of the natural ebb and flow of their animal spirits for a new accession of insanity, thus treating the patient with unnecessary restraint and endeavouring to cure the case with 'A wanton administration of strong and deleterious drugs'. Allen quotes Pinel: "In diseases of the mind, as well as in all other ailments, it is an art of no little importance to administer medicines properly; but it is an art of much greater and more difficult acquisition, to know when to suspend, or altogether omit them."(54)

By paying attention to changes in patient behaviour and an increase in their excitability it is possible to predict extreme changes in the weather before they even happen. Early treatment and alteration in procedures to calm and quieten can then be brought about before any damage is done. Beneficial changes can be made, according to Allen, in areas of 'dietetics, pathology and therapeutics'.(55)

On periodicity Allen lists various types of diseases that tend to take place at different seasons of the year. He claims that observations on the seasonal occurrences as well as when the increase in severity of the attacks takes place during a twenty-four hour period, can assist the doctor in diagnosis. Regular observations of these things need to be practised or a doctor could be deceived, by diurnal or atmospheric alterations, in deciding his diagnosis and treatment. 'We may ascertain how far these stated times of recurrence indicate that the disease is assuming the sthenic (morbidly active) or asthenic (weakening) form.' When the effects are external, in all cases, 'Nothing seems to counteract them better than sponging with water: for invalids warm, for the weak tepid, and for the strong cold.'(64)

In 1828 Dr G. M. Burrows had given brief consideration to the effects of the weather upon insanity and come to different conclusions to Forster or Allen.<sup>108</sup> He had concluded that climate in general did not appear to exacerbate mental derangement but that changes did appear to take place seasonally when the weather was at its hottest. Thus, he wrote,

In Paris on an average of nine years it (insanity) uniformly increased in May, arrived at the maximum in July and thence gradually decreased till January when it was reduced to the minimum.<sup>5</sup> [...] From registers published in the cities of Westminster, Paris and Hamburg we find that in June and July suicide exceeds. In fact suicide prevails most when Fahrenheit's thermometer ranges at about 84°F. Hence, I think it is conclusive, that it is not climate but a high temperature which disposes the intellectual functions to derangement.<sup>109</sup>

Allen admits, himself, that his further observations on lunar and planetary effects are still at an early stage — he is still collecting facts and forming tables of illustration.(Preface) He has not fully made up his mind on their importance. He notes that changes in the weather do more frequently take place at

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<sup>5</sup> \*Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales, vol xvi. p.166.

certain lunar periods. The mean barometrical pressure attends the first and last quarters while its extremes accompany the new and full moon. He says: 'From the observations I have made among hundreds of insane, for years, I think an unsettled and excited state of mind prevails more on average at these times than at any other.'<sup>(78)</sup> Allen, like so many others of the early nineteenth-century, was a consistent and keen observer and a dedicated collector of facts. He noted that there was a constant relation between the phases of the moon and the rainy days which coincide with these phases. He had kept a record over nineteen years and gives the figures from 19 October 1808 to 18 October 1827.<sup>(78)</sup>

Among his difficulties in ascertaining the effects on the individual are the fact that every person has a peculiar periodicity of his own which interferes with and modifies that of the atmosphere as well as that of the moon and both influence each other. The apparent differences in the effects may arise from difference of constitutions and their state at the time when the influence takes place. He does indeed seem to be dealing with an insoluble problem.

As for epidemics, cholera did not come to Western Europe as an epidemic until the nineteenth-century. Just a year after Allen published his book in 1832 seven thousand died of the disease in London alone.<sup>110</sup> Allen quotes three large sections from Kennedy's work, which, he was delighted to find, coincided with his own theories. Kennedy's observations had been made in India where he had worked for some time. The amalgamation of quotations from Kennedy's book are placed under three headings: 'Description of the disease, Kennedy's theory of the disease, and his practical suggestions.' Both men agreed that the periodicity of the disease, which as yet was unexplained, was due to the regular emanation of: 'Some noxious agency from the earth [...] which obeys some order of operation yet undiscovered.'<sup>(133)</sup> Kennedy recounts epidemics which attacked villages on the right bank of a river, some with only a few cases, others being wiped out entirely, and some villages escaping as the disease progressed, while almost all in neighbouring villages died. The disease then disappeared for several months, returning later to similarly effect the left bank of the river, whose inhabitants had concluded they had escaped the scourge. (No thought in these descriptions was given to the river itself and its pollution.)

Of his own thoughts on the subject Allen added that: 'Epidemics travel for the most part with the sun and its march appears subject to the same order of operation as that of magnetism. [...] It will march in some given line, often against prevailing winds, and out of that line we escape its baleful influence.'<sup>(133)</sup> He also quotes Dr J. Johnson's article which had recently appeared in *The Times* (no date given) which is in agreement with himself and Kennedy: 'The primary causes of cholera as well as that of other epidemics

spring from the bowels of the earth and thus contaminate the air we breathe.'(131-132). Allen then attempts in a long footnote to explain physiologically how this poisoned air is absorbed by the lungs and affects the brain and the rest of the body. It is an example of the very undeveloped state of medical understanding in general in the 1830s.

The book became out of date as its theories very soon became obsolete and can now in most respects be discounted as such. However, the subject of periodicity in weather and atmospheric, its effects on the human body and the body's own periodicity are still subjects not fully understood and often ignored. It adds to the picture of Allen as someone who had continuing interest in, and the desire to contribute factual knowledge to, an amazing number of subjects. He continued, throughout his life, to read the most up-to-date material available, on subjects that interested him and never seemed to reach the point where he felt he was too old to learn. His active and enquiring mind could not have failed to stimulate patients with whom he had daily contact and conversation. His collection of observations on the weather would have been appreciated by the meteorological society. Unfortunately we have no firm evidence that he submitted them.

#### **3.1.4.4 Carlyle's Visit to York**

While studying in Edinburgh Allen had met one, Thomas Carlyle, son of a stonemason, from the tiny southern border village of Ecclefechan and his friend Edward Irving. These two men he knew only in a passing acquaintance as fellow students. He had no inkling then that they were, in a few years, both to become known throughout Britain <sup>111</sup>

Allen met them briefly again in Kirkcaldy in 1817 when he learnt that Carlyle was restlessly seeking to find advancement and was toying with the idea of taking the post of tutor in a wealthy family. In May 1820, six months after Allen had been at the York Asylum he learnt of a businessman in the area seeking a tutor for his son. Allen remembered Thomas Carlyle and wrote to him at Ecclefechan. It was the beginning of an eight-month correspondence between them. Someone else filled the tutor's post. However, Allen extended an invitation to Carlyle to visit York. Apart from short excursions across the border the young Scotsman had never been to England and expressed some enthusiasm for the idea

A further opportunity for Carlyle occurred in the September of the same year. Allen informed him that a Mr John Hutton of Newby Wiske, near Northallerton, was seeking a tutor for his mentally sub-normal brother. The fee was to be a hundred pounds per annum and after some hesitation Carlyle agreed to

discuss the possibility and his prospective employer offered to pay for his travel to York.

Carlyle wrote to Allen asking him to find: 'A decent place of abode for a few days and situated so that we may be very near each other [...] Anyway I expect much pleasure from talking over old bygone things from discussing Spurzheimism, Whiggism, and Church of Englandism.'<sup>112</sup> The visit to York took place, the result of which is well known — Carlyle's refusal of the job and his scornful description of his prospective pupil as 'a dotard and a vegetable'.<sup>113</sup> Carlyle's vivid description of his visit made in letters to friends actually suggests that he thoroughly enjoyed himself — finding it all immensely interesting and stimulating. Matthew Allen obviously played the good host. That Allen was able to introduce an unknown Scotsman to some of the leading citizens of York indicates that his position at the York Asylum was seen as fairly prestigious in the city. Carlyle wrote to a correspondent:

Upon the whole however I derived great amusement from my journey. I viewed a most rich and picturesque country. I conversed with all kinds of men, from graziers up to knights of the shire, argued with them all and broke specimens from their souls (if any) which I retain within the museum of my cranium for your inspection at a future day.<sup>114</sup>

Amongst those in York who amused and appalled Carlyle with their opinions were Charles Wellbeloved who was divinity tutor and director of the Unitarian institution, Manchester College, York, from 1803 to 1840. He not only lamented to Carlyle the presence of mysticism in religion but: 'Lamented in my presence the absurdities of Calvinism — I never felt so proud of being Scots.'<sup>115</sup>

He also met Mr William Hargrove the editor of the York Herald, whom he described as made of lead and John Croft, then eighty-eight years old, 'A well-known antiquary of York and writer of small works.'<sup>116</sup> There was yet one more noticeable Yorkshireman whom Carlyle described and through his telling of the following incident we know that he visited Allen at the asylum and ate meals there with him and his patients:

There was humour that smacked of the soil in a trifle Carlyle recalled with pleasure. He used to meet at the dinner table of York Asylum "a small shrivelled elderly man," a harmless patient. "He ate pretty fairly, but every minute or two inconsolably flung down his knife and fork, stretched out his palms, and twisting his poor countenance into utter woe, gave a low pathetic howl - 'I've la-ast mi happetayte!'"<sup>117</sup>

Carlyle summed up his opinion of the city as being the Boetia of Britain, that is, a region of Greece proverbial for the stupidity of its inhabitants.

There must have been a pleasant exchange of letters immediately after the York visit, which in Carlyle's eyes was certainly no disaster. Many more letters were obviously written than survive. Matthew,

however, may have felt the visit something of a failure, because although Carlyle seemed more than keen to turn a mere acquaintance into a friendship and to draw Allen into his close circle, it is Allen who literally 'failed to turn up' after he had promised to visit Carlyle in Edinburgh the following Christmas. In the last of their series of letters written on 22 January 1821 Carlyle says:

The debt I am now paying you would have been more agreeable discharged by oral communication during your projected visit to this our northern city. Why did you not come at Christmas? Why not go with me to Glasgow and see all the spinning mills and lunatic asylums and preachers and philosophers of the famous West? Examine your head I pray you, and if you do not find a great (temporary) depression in the organ of Will — then burn your Spurzheim and throw your stucco model into the deepest pool of Ouse. Seriously you should have come: Irving would have felt as he ought to on the occasion; and Dury or Drury — your correspondent and fellow labourer — bade me tell you that all kinds of accommodation were in readiness for you whenever you pleased to honour him with using them. Is the MD quite banished though? I am here and would be quite happy to see you.<sup>118</sup>

William Drury was the superintendent of the Glasgow Asylum. It is interesting and perhaps significant that Allen knew and was corresponding with him. The American professor, John Griscom had visited the Glasgow Asylum two years earlier in 1819 and described it in most favourable terms: 'Improvement by moral treatment is the object most carefully aimed at.'<sup>119</sup>

We know, as noted above on p36, that Matthew Allen was awarded an MD in July of that same year.<sup>120</sup> From Carlyle's remark here it would seem that there was some doubt about Allen receiving it. His sponsors were Edinburgh doctors; the university that awarded the degree was in Aberdeen. He would probably have had to travel to one or both cities. Allen was chronically short of money and would have needed a fair amount for registration fees and travel — shortage of money was probably also the reason why he stayed at home in York for Christmas.

The rest of Carlyle's letter indicates that Allen had had the temerity to offer Carlyle a job: 'You asked me lately if I "would really take your secretary's place?"' It is not clear whether Allen meant his personal secretary — this is hardly credible — but he probably meant secretary to the York Asylum, an appointment surely made by the asylum governors. Carlyle declined the offer and suggested that the job be given to, 'A young man here beside me about to gain a surgeon's diploma [...] he urges Allen to answer: fully, explicitly and by the very first opportunity.'<sup>121</sup>

We do not know if Allen did, but only know that the young surgeon referred to was in a short time employed in another post. The correspondence between the Doctor and the Scotsman appears to have been dropped shortly after that; however, they were to meet again a decade later when Allen was settled in

his Essex institution and Carlyle was becoming a lion amongst the literary elite in London.

### 3.1.4.5 With A View to the Future

That Allen was a benevolent man who treated his patients with compassion there is no doubt. His motives, however, were far from utterly unselfish. He has rightfully been called a spendthrift <sup>122</sup> — the abuse of money was his life-long weakness and his final undoing. Throughout his time at the York Asylum his debts hung around his neck. When considering Oswald's suggestion that he apply for the post in the first place he had expressed some doubt when writing from Edinburgh: 'It is a situation that precludes the prospect of my making much to pay my friends [...] Another consideration is [...] that I could get into a respectable way that would afford to have my family about me, with comforts at least equal to their present state. I think it would be my duty to have them with me.' <sup>123</sup>

About his bankruptcy he wrote at the same time:

After an immensity of trouble I have got the creditors to agree to my discharge, without you being called upon [...] I trust you will have the goodness to desire Mr John Campbell to give your consent and Mr E. Wilson's at the same time [...] As to the money you have paid on my account I can now assure you that you will some day, not perhaps far distant, get it all again. <sup>124</sup>

His intentions were good and his annual income, which was raised to one hundred and fifty pounds per annum, was generous for the time, but it ran through his fingers like water and he did not fulfil his initial resolutions. Oswald records: 'After he succeeded to the Lunatic Asylum he still continued to apply to me for assistance to relieve him from his difficulties which I was unable to do.' <sup>125</sup> To Matthew he wrote: 'Do you remember that at this time [October, 1824] I have between three and four hundred pounds to raise on your account, and are you aware that I am paying near £80 per annum as interest on money I have borrowed on your account.' <sup>126</sup>

Having truly found his *métier* in his work amongst lunatics, Allen had to square this with his constant need for more and more money. In 1823 events took place at the asylum which must have pointed him in a direction which promised to solve this conundrum. In 1823 the governors of the York Asylum described in their annual report their newly built extensions and alterations to the West gallery. It had been splendidly fitted out to receive 'superior patients', that is, those who would not normally be placed in public institutions. Such was the new construction that they would have entire privacy and individual care. The experiment at York was not successful. The report for June 1827 says: 'We [...] regret that the private apartments lately fitted up in a most handsome and convenient manner have as yet attracted little attention.



They would conveniently accommodate eight or ten patients but have never at one time contained more than three.'<sup>127</sup>

The admission of private patients to charitable or county asylums became common practice and was generally more successful than it was in York. Fee paying patients in public asylums subsidised the care of paupers. Some asylums, for example that of Stafford County asylum which opened in 1818 divided their first class patients into three groups. Those of the most inferior rank paid 12 shillings per week, not much more than the parish rate for lunatics. The middle ranks paid no less than a pound and the highest rank 2 guineas and upward. In the Gloucester Asylum the charge for separate rooms and a personal servant was 2½ to 3 guineas.<sup>128</sup>

Private asylums had existed elsewhere long before this but Allen, for the first time perhaps, saw their potential. He saw in detail that such patients could be profitable to their carers. He saw the failure of the system at York and thought perhaps that, had he had his own asylum, without charity patients taking up most of the space, with good publicity and the right contacts, he could have made a success of the venture. About this time the idea must have taken root in his mind to open and run his own private asylum for the insane.

### 3.2 Allen's Resignation from The York Asylum.

The existing records of the Asylum note Matthew Allen's resignation in October 1824, but include no comment about his service record. It has to be concluded that his work had been, at the least, satisfactory, as no complaints were recorded. Matthew makes the positive claim: 'On leaving it was voted unanimously, "that I deserved the thanks of the Governors for my constant and successful efforts in establishing and perfecting the mild system of treatment there."<sup>129</sup> Although there is no corroborating evidence for this statement, there does not appear to have been anything untoward about Matthew's resignation. His brother's remarks have, however, always raised the possibility of Matthew having left under a cloud. Considering that Oswald himself admits to very little personal contact with Matthew during his time at the asylum, and that Oswald was prejudiced from the beginning and beset with fears concerning his brother's ability to satisfy, it seems he did not really know why, and under what circumstances, Matthew had resigned.<sup>130</sup> His conclusions were highly speculative and fuelled by anger at seeing his brother leave the post which he had gone to so much trouble to procure for him. Oswald had envisaged that Matthew would spend the rest of his life in that secure position, where he himself could attempt to

keep an eye on him, or use his social contacts to keep himself informed as to his brother's behaviour. His *Memoirs* show the negative way in which Oswald interpreted what he heard and saw but did not always understand. They also give hints as to some of the things that Matthew did to secure himself with what he thought was a good standing amongst the people of York and in preparation for his future plans for a private asylum. Oswald saw it differently:

I soon found to my secret grief that he was still in a great measure the same unchanged character. Indeed his religious and political principles were become more and more estranged from what had been inculcated upon his tender mind by the best of Parents.

He appears to have indulged his ambition and vanity in what he conceives the ennobling pursuits of human life, seeking popular attention and applause by every possible means, sacrificing every religious principle, by attending the various places of public worship, being a complete Latitudinarian, and if he has any particular creed, I should suspect it is Socinianism.<sup>131</sup>

To his brother, in what appears to be the last letter he ever wrote to him, Oswald expressed himself thus:

'But alas! You soon contracted a new and a numerous acquaintance and entered into all kinds of society and amusements, flattering your own vanity, and neglecting the duties of your situation.'<sup>132</sup> This is surely

Oswald again jumping to conclusions. There is no evidence of Matthew neglecting his duties but rather the opposite, that he immersed himself in the life of the asylum and in the lives of those he cared for, resulting in a certain measure of success with regard to their cure. Again Oswald was only guessing when he wrote in the same letter:

Had you conducted yourself with propriety in the Asylum, I have no doubt your salary in process of time would have advanced to £220 per annum — an income (including all the other advantages) far exceeding the clear profits of many private Practitioners in York. And you might have remained many years. But you not only behaved improperly towards the Physician of the institution, but the liberties you took with the Committee often astonished me.<sup>133</sup>

This is the only reference to discord with Dr Wake, the physician, who was a friend and compeer of Oswald's. There can be no doubt that during his time at the asylum Matthew would have differed considerably with the older man who lived away from the asylum and its pressures and had a private practice of his own. It is unlikely that Matthew would have completely succeeded in bridling his tongue, and when he didn't, Oswald would probably have heard about it. There is, however, no official complaint in existence. Oswald again speculates on what happened at the time of Matthew's resignation:

When you became fully apprised of their determination to remove you, and you had promised to send in your resignation, upon the expressed condition of a vote of thanks being passed, and you saved from the disgrace of dismissal; what has been your subsequent conduct, instead of punctuality to your engagements, or looking out for some other situation you have been amusing yourself in London and Paris, spending your money and incurring the further displeasure of the Committee.<sup>134</sup>

It is clear that Oswald was not a party to Matthew's plans, and left in the dark about exactly what had happened and the reason for Matthew's actions, he suspected the worst. There is a level of detail in the above which suggests more than mere speculation, however, there is also inconsistency in his remarks which give the impression of protesting too much. If Matthew did incur the *further* displeasure of the Committee why did they not then publicly dismiss him? Oswald seems to have gathered some information but could not make sense of it. There is no other reference which confirms that Matthew did travel abroad. (For further discussion on the relevance and importance of the suggestion that he did, see p.91) Finally Oswald makes another rather obscure remark in a postscript to his brother which reflects something of the eagerness with which Matthew set about his new task: 'I cannot quite comprehend why your quondam friend S. W. N. [S. W. Nicholl — on the Board of Governors] should act in so decided hostility against you in refusing your remaining in the Asylum. I suppose he has his reasons. There appears something rather arbitrary and tyrannical.'<sup>135</sup> According to the *Quarterly Wages Book* for the period Dr Allen was paid for working until 26 October 1824, but we know that by the 8 October 1824 Oswald was already writing to him in Hull.<sup>136</sup> Oswald seemed to think that the governors had forced him to quit the asylum before his term of working was completed. Matthew could also have taken all the leave that was due to him and which he could squeeze out of his employers and made all haste towards organising his next job.

### 3.3 The Beattie Family of Hull

Through his work at the York Asylum Allen had connections with the above family. They were to play a very significant part in his life at this time. Unlike most private asylum superintendents Allen acquired his first patients before he acquired an asylum in which to house them.

The Reverend Beattie of Hull was a Church of England clergyman.<sup>137</sup> He appears to have had a very large family. In late 1822 and in 1823 disaster struck the family on three separate occasions. Jane, aged nineteen, one of the youngest children, and of a melancholic nature, had for a year been suffering increasing depression. Her condition had so worsened that on 18 December 1822 her mother had her admitted to the asylum at York where the superintendent, Dr Allen, on admission diagnosed her to be in a state of Dementia, the cause of which was unknown. As the daughter of a clergyman she paid twelve shillings a week, a slightly higher fee than the average charity patient paid. Then on 21 April 1823 it was recorded in the *Proceedings in Committee* that the payment for Jane Beattie was to be reduced by two shillings to ten shillings a week and have four shillings a week allowed from the Lupton Fund from the

beginning of the present Quarter.<sup>138</sup> This was a fund set up during the early days of the asylum's history, and was administered by the Archbishop of York to help patients in financial need. The family's circumstances had obviously taken a sudden turn for the worse and it seems probable that Jane's father had died.

David Beattie, Jane's brother and seventeen years her senior, was a qualified apothecary, working in London.<sup>139</sup> Five years previously he had suffered an illness the cause of which was diagnosed as a *Coup de Soleil* which had a permanent and slowly deteriorating affect on his mind. In October of 1823 his mother brought him in a state of imbecility to the York Asylum where Dr Allen admitted him. David's financial circumstances were, however, very different. Maybe he had inherited from his father. Allen recorded in his notebook that David was admitted at a fee of a hundred pounds per annum — apparently the only patient whose fees were stated at a yearly rate — and the Proceedings in Committee recorded his admission on 7 October with the statement, '£100 p.a. Everything found'.<sup>140</sup> Given the date of his admission it seems likely that he would have been admitted to the new private wing. There he would have had Dr Allen and Dr Wake's sole attention, but his mind had so deteriorated over the period of five years since the commencement of his disease, that there was little they could do for him. He remained in a helpless state for the rest of his life.

Matthew Allen had determined by 1824 to open his own private asylum. When he left the York Asylum he had formulated a plan. If he was unsure where to site his project — and it would seem he was, as even after he left he was still awaiting a reply from Oswald about the renting of his country house, *Millcrooks*, for the purpose,<sup>141</sup> — he was probably aware of the existence of the property which he finally settled on in Essex, Leopard's Hill Lodge at High Beech in Epping Forest. It appears to have belonged to a family member. Though he knew of this property he had no means of purchasing or renting it and had never seen it and was not sure of its suitability. He had to go down to the South of England and look for himself.

However, he determined to begin with what he already had. That was the confidence of Jane and David Beattie and their mother. According to the records of the York Asylum David was discharged to his mother on the authority of Drs Wake and Hodgson [Allen's successor as superintendent / apothecary] on 6 December 1824.<sup>142</sup> From York, on 8 October 1824, Allen had gone straight to Hull. Somehow he persuaded Mrs Beattie that her children would be better taken care of if they remained under his personal care, the care of one on whom they had come to depend. The High Beech records also state that David

came to Essex from York Asylum on 6 December. However, when Dr Wake discharged David Beattie he had certainly never heard of High Beech Private Asylum, for it did not yet exist anywhere but in the mind and determination of Matthew Allen, who seems to have taken somewhat of a risk by promising to be responsible for David. Nevertheless, he resolved to begin as he meant to go on, with two patients who paid good fees. Jane was discharged from York on 5 January 1825 and, according to the records joined her brother at High Beech on that very same day.<sup>143</sup>

Whatever the facts of the matter, Allen's fortunes changed dramatically the moment he left York for Hull. From the time that he had arrived in York in 1799 as a sixteen year old until he left that same city in October 1824 the picture which we get of him, largely from his brother's *Memoirs*, is negative — a picture of a loser, a failure and a fraud. Oswald has virtually nothing to say of him after 1824 and the evidence about his subsequent life comes from a variety of sources, apart from Matthew's own written works. With success and financial relief, the picture we get of Allen is of a charming, confident and above all compassionate man, constantly tempted by the need for more money, but who remained steady in the face of that temptation for another fifteen years. As Dr Barnet commented: 'Other sources [...] show a character so different as to be hardly recognisable as the irresponsible and rather amusing scoundrel of his brother's *Memoirs*.'<sup>144</sup> Some credit for this change in him can be given to the years of apprenticeship he had endured as a mad-doctor amongst the residents of the York Asylum. It was during these years 1819 to 1824 that the foundation was laid for Matthew Allen's future practice and development.

### 3.4 The Founding of His Own Asylum

In her article in *Medical History* Dr Margaret Barnet writes about Allen at the end of 1824: 'Within a year Dr Matthew Allen MD had opened a licensed lunatic asylum at High Beech in Epping Forest. There is no information as to how he obtained the money to set up the establishment. Probably with his powers of persuasion he found a willing backer; or perhaps Oswald helped him once more.'<sup>145</sup> The latter was certainly not the case. Oswald had done with his brother for good. That he had a backer — two in fact — was true, and Dr Barnet failed to notice Matthew's own account in *his Essay on the Classification of the Insane* of how this came about. Support for his scheme came to him from a quite unexpected source and was as much a surprise to himself as anyone. There is no dating of the incident, but it must have taken place between the time he left York on 8 October 1824 and when David Beattie's mother withdrew her son from the York Asylum on 6 December 1824, being assured that Dr Allen had his

new refuge ready for him.

We have already seen that Allen described George Cooke, a Dissenting Minister from Reith in Swaledale, as patient No.106 admitted to York Asylum on 11 April 1820, aged sixty five and that he recovered partly due to reading the Doctor's sermons. Allen related further about this man:

In the autumn of 1824 he walked about 100 miles to see me and not finding my place of residence, he called on a medical acquaintance to whom his description of my kindness and attention, and their happy influence upon himself, were so powerful and eloquent, that this new and accidental medical acquaintance, became from that time to the present, my first and warmest medical friend in encouraging me to establish myself in my present residence, and to whom I have to attribute the origin of all my success, so that this recovered patient's gratitude, who followed me unexpectedly, was the first step in my progress, and was the sole foundation of everything I have done or exists in this place. It was my only introduction. I may be permitted therefore to acknowledge my great obligations to the warm-hearted friendship of the person, of whose melancholy state I have just given a general description, as well as the medical friend to whom I have alluded.<sup>146</sup>

Given the terms used by Allen it has to be assumed that these two men between them provided the necessary finance for the setting up of High Beech Asylum.<sup>147</sup>

When George Cooke was discharged from the York Asylum in 1822 he was officially put into the care of a Mr Mason.<sup>148</sup> The 1851 census (this was five years after Matthew Allen's death) notes those residing at Fair Mead House at High Beech Asylum at the time and includes, as a guest, Fredrick Mason, Solicitor, aged sixty one, born in York.<sup>149</sup> It seems fair to assume that George Cooke had been a client of Mason, Solicitor of York, in the 1820s and had helped to finance Allen's work with the assistance of this legal firm and also that the Asylum's finances were still being administered, at least partly, through this same firm in 1851.

Allen's benefactor lived to a ripe old age. He was still alive in 1833 thirteen years after his original confinement and still, at the age of seventy-eight, intimately concerned in the work Allen was doing. It was in that year that Allen was involved in a court case concerning one of his patients and found it necessary to collect a number of character affidavits from friends, colleagues, and well known acquaintances. A Captain Thomas Brooke, no more information is given about him than his name, was staying as a guest at High Beech at the time. Brooke was a friend of George Cooke and put his signature to the following statement:

In September 1820 a very intimate friend was placed under Dr Allen's care and whom he saw almost daily for 12 months [...] He wholly attributes the recovery of the above case to Dr Allen's very anxious, constant, unwearied and judicious exertions in behalf of his friend. He has heard his friend declare that he firmly believes that he would never have recovered under any other person's care and that he attributes the permanence of his recovery and his improved state of mind to such exertions. That such is the decided conviction of his friend is proved by his gratitude evinced by substantial gifts, and by his anxiously cultivating the friendship of Dr Allen up to the present time, that he loses no opportunity of bearing testimony to Dr Allen's unwearied kindness and medical

skill, in the treatment of not only his own case, but also of many others which he's had the opportunity of witnessing. He has himself spent weeks together at Allen's at High Beech. He knows of several who have voluntarily placed themselves under their care.<sup>150</sup>

Cooke's financial help was probably not a loan, but more likely an outright gift, or series of gifts, for by 1826 the Land Tax returns describe Dr Allen as the sole owner of the property in Epping Forest.<sup>151</sup> In 1829 he was able to afford large improvements and extensions to the existing buildings and, despite marrying for the third time and a rapidly growing family, he seems to have been, for many years, generally free of debt. The identity of his medical friend is unknown and whether or not he was from York or Hull or elsewhere is ambiguous. What is certain is that this event changed Allen's life. It must have seemed not only a reward for all those self-denying hours he had spent amongst mad people in York but an expression of belief and confidence in his abilities, like no other he had ever received before, contrasting delightfully with his brother's opinions. At last here were people who believed in him, and who also perhaps inspire Mrs Beattie to have confidence in him and trust her two sad children to his care.

## CHAPTER IV

### PHRENOLOGY, ITS HISTORY AND APPLICATION TO THE

### TREATMENT OF THE INSANE

#### 4.1 Matthew Allen and Phrenology

It is not known when and how Matthew Allen became interested in phrenology. On his release from prison in February 1816 Allen and his family left Edinburgh. He had no idea that he was leaving the city at such a vital time in its history and in the experience of its student population. In the summer of that year there took place, verbally and in the periodical press, what became known as 'The Edinburgh Debates'. These introduced phrenology to the medical students and university faculty, resulting in there being a greater number of phrenological practitioners in Edinburgh, at that time, than anywhere else in Britain. There was also more vociferous opposition to the practice there than anywhere else. Allen missed this introduction to phrenology and was not present at the lectures of its major proponent, Dr Spurzheim. As far as it is known he never came under the latter's direct influence.

The first we know of Allen's interest in this new theory of the brain was when he lectured on the subject at Kirkcaldy in 1817. His interest lasted for many years, first through lecturing on the subject and then through applying phrenology to the cure of the insane, both at the York Asylum and in his own private asylum. There is some evidence, which we shall come to later, that he developed his own ideas as to exactly how phrenology was effective. He also wrote about its application, particularly in the field of education, recommending it alongside the good practices found in other systems of teaching. So too in his treatment of the insane, he used phrenology alongside a range of other treatments. Allen repeatedly emphasised the need for a balanced approach, in intellectual interests, social behaviour and emotional attitudes. He believed the incipient beginnings of insanity began with an imbalance in one or all of these areas. If observed and corrected at an early stage, insanity could be prevented altogether, or fairly easily and rapidly cured. If imbalance in attitude and behaviour was not corrected it led to the acute stage of insanity which caused irreparable physiological damage to the brain, resulting in chronic and incurable insanity. Thus phrenology, which involved encouraging the use of all the cerebral 'faculties' in a balanced



harmony, was of great importance to Allen as a part of his treatment of lunacy in its early stages. As it was such a vital tool its history, practice, varied applications, faults, failures and many criticisms are important in understanding Allen and his work.

#### 4.1.1 The Early History Of Phrenology

The ideas of Rene Descartes (1596-1650) were, and to an extent still are, immensely influential. In the 1820s the ordinary educated individual often held Cartesian views which he had acquired without knowledge of their origin. For example it was commonly held that man was a dichotomous being made up of body and soul, two separate essences — matter, extended, divisible, subject to scientific investigation and to decay, — spirit, unextended, indivisible, active, free and immortal. Though originating in Greek thought the modern version of this idea of man derives from Descartes. He believed that sensations such as pain and hunger enabled the interaction between matter and spirit, giving the mind a conscious awareness of the body. Though the mind maintained a certain independence: 'An important tenet of Descartes' dualism ... is that some mental processes have no dependence on the body.'<sup>1</sup> This was Descartes notion of innate ideas or the immediate data of consciousness. Acceptance of these views presented problems of explaining how, *in fact*, impressions on the sense organs caused ideas, and thoughts caused movements, that is, how interaction occurred when it was metaphysically inconceivable.

Where did mind fit into this scheme? Was it an expression of the soul ie. spirit or simply a product of the brain ie. matter. It had become the acceptable 'Christian' idea that mind and soul were the immortal essence of which the human spirit consisted. To claim that mind was a product of the brain was to commit the sin of materialism, that is, to believe that body and soul decay in the grave and immortality is a myth. These 'dualisms ... raised questions which no nice man would ask, and which when asked by not-so-nice men led to philosophical absurdities.'<sup>2</sup> Moves away from Cartesian views began with Locke (1632-1704) and his belief in the mind as a *Tabula Rasa*, or blank sheet. He believed that all faculties, propensities and talents originate from experience and, the sensationalist hypothesis, that men are born equal and become different through education and circumstances.

Dr Franz Gall of Vienna studied the anatomy of the brain during the last decades of the eighteenth-century and concluded that it was the sole organ of the mind and was itself divided into numerous organs each associated with specific human behaviour patterns. Working together with his pupil Johann Spurzheim they devised the system which became known as phrenology. The faculties or organs of

the brain, located at fixed places on its surface, form protuberances on the skull bone. They are more or less pronounced in each individual. By careful manipulation of the cranium an experienced practitioner can assess and describe an individual's temperament, according to the balance and size of the different faculties indicated by these surface bumps. In identifying these organs and functions of the brain, Gall took medicine, for the first time in centuries, beyond the classical humoral nosology of disease.

Over the years as faculties were proposed, tested and 'proven' to exist, charts were published, enumerating and mapping the position of the faculties on the head. In its final form it accredited the organs of the brain with thirty-six faculties. For example one of these faculties — Amativeness — has been described as:

That which gives rise to the sexual propensity and is common to man and animals — found in the Cerebellum, or smaller and inferior portion of the brain. Its size is indicated by the distance betwixt the Mastoid Processes behind the ears, or by the general thickness of the neck from ear to ear. This organ when fully developed and duly balanced and regulated — naturally disposes the individual to the formation of the marriage contract.<sup>3</sup>

In Vienna, in 1807, Gall's theories were rejected by the city fathers on the grounds of 'materialism' and Gall was forced into exile. He, and his pupil Spurzheim, went first to Paris to popularise their teaching. There they came into conflict with the philosophy of the *Idéologues*, amongst whom had been Condillac, (d.1780) who taught that the mind was derived from bodily sensations which, arousing pleasure and pain, prompted the formation of our wants, instincts and habits. Gall differed from them by insisting on the innate nature of mental powers. In answer to further accusations of materialism Gall defended his position:

We consider the faculties of the soul only in so far as, through the medium of material organs, they may become phenomena for us [...] Our principle, to wit that the qualities of the Soul and Spirit are innate, and that their manifestation depends on material organs, cannot thereby (i.e. through the opinions of theologians or metaphysicians) suffer the slightest alteration.<sup>4</sup>

After some years Gall and Spurzheim and their phrenological system had had very little impact on the medical profession in Paris, or amongst the populace in general. In 1813 Spurzheim returned to Vienna to finish his medical studies, and in the following year went to London, where he gave a series of lectures and, in 1815, published his first book in English: *The Physiognomical System of Drs Gall and Spurzheim*. It was very widely reviewed, but rejected by most. The article in the *Edinburgh Review* of June 1815 was particularly vituperous describing the founders of the new system as: 'Quacks, mountebanks and men of skulls, and their system as: perpetual substitution of assertion for demonstration and conjecture for fact.'<sup>5</sup>

Dr Spurzheim arrived in Edinburgh on 24 June 1816 to lecture on phrenology and answer his critics. Many people were taken by storm, particularly the young, freethinking, anti-establishment members of the student community. Phrenology widely applied, for example to education, prison reform and medicine, became an important means of disseminating radical ideology. It was seen as a tool against the class system as the development of brain faculties was not restricted to the wealthy. It was open to all: 'There was no art or mystery. Anyone could look at the bumps on a person's head and see their gifts. Self-help appealed to the mandarins of new wealth confronted by the hauteur of the old; knowing one's true talents made a mockery of patronage and the old-boy network.'<sup>6</sup> Had Allen heard of it he would probably have immediately found it attractive. Though aged thirty-four in 1816 he was a dissenter with radical and progressive ideas and not much in harmony with the views of his tutors or the average man of his age.

Students were also discontented with the standard of lectures regularly given in the university medical school.

Alexander Munro tertius had been accused of continuing during his tenure of the Chair to read his grandfather's lectures verbatim. Even an annual shower of peas from his students, we are assured, did not persuade him to alter the dates in such remarks as "When I was a student in Leyden in 1719." Although this story is not authentic the fact that it was generally accepted is indicative of the decline in the University School of Anatomy.<sup>7</sup>

The debate, which developed after Spurzheim's lectures and demonstrations, was used to confront the academic establishment and to demand radical change. Popular opinion was split and the pros and cons of the system were hotly debated and reviewed in the press. As Cantor notes: 'Virtually nothing was understood about brain function. Munro was never prepared to make any concise statement of the brain's function.'<sup>8</sup> Dr John Barclay, a private tutor of anatomy, whose lectures, accredited by the Royal College of Surgeons, were vastly preferred by the medical students to Munro's, also frankly admitted his ignorance regarding the brain. The experience of George Combe was typical of Edinburgh students:

When Dr Barclay began to dissect the brain, Combe gave his keenest attention to the lecturer. He sat for four hours in eager expectation, and saw part after part of the brain exhibited, named and cut away. He waited for an explanation of the functions, and was disappointed. The long lecture concluded, he says, with the professor's frank acknowledgement that all he had been communicating 'amounted to nothing more than a display of parts of the brain in the order of an arbitrary dissection; and that in simple truth, nothing was known concerning the relation of the structure which he had exhibited and the functions of the mind.'<sup>9</sup>

Barclay had also been Allen's tutor. Part of Allen's belief in the unity behind all things was that mind and body could not be separated or understood apart from each other. The part that the brain played

in the connection with mind would have been of immense interest to him. He must have suffered frustrations similar to those of Combe when listening to Barclay's lectures. In sharp contrast was Combe's later experience when hearing Spurzheim:

He laid *The Edinburgh Review* on the table. Then he proceeded to display the structure of the brain in a manner inexpressibly superior to that of my teacher, Dr Barclay; and I saw with my own eyes that the reviewer had shown profound ignorance and descended to gross misrepresentation in regard to appearances presented by this organ when dissected by a skilful anatomist. My faith in the reviewer was shaken. [...] At the close of the series I had attained the conviction that the faculties of the mind which he had expounded bore a much greater resemblance to those which I had observed operating in active life, than did those of which I had read in the works of metaphysicians; but I was not convinced that these faculties manifested themselves by particular parts of the brain. Dr Spurzheim had told us himself that this conviction could be reached only by extensive personal observation.<sup>10</sup>

After Spurzheim left Edinburgh George Combe ordered a number of skulls from London and put the theory to the test for himself. Many of his friends joined him in his investigations and as he learned he began to give informal lectures on the subject. George Combe became the leading protagonist for the cause of phrenology in Britain after Spurzheim left the country. By 1822 Combe's lectures were included in the list of extramural lectures for Edinburgh University listed in Bower's Student Handbook. The Edinburgh Phrenological Society was formed in 1823. Other similar societies sprang up all over the country.

There was a strong anti-phrenological lobby who argued against the 'science'. They saw it as amoral and determinist, giving support to those who refused to take responsibility for their behaviour. Those who held dualist opinions, that mind and body were totally unconnected, raised the objection to phrenology that it was materialistic and therefore anti-Christian. Later, the materialist Vogt for example, taught that the brain secreted thought as the liver secreted bile.<sup>11</sup> Allen disclaimed any personal belief in such materialism.

Combe caused further furore and debate when his article *An Explanation of the Physiognomical Systems of Drs Gall and Spurzheim* was published in *The Scots Magazine* in April 1817. As Matthew Allen had missed the Edinburgh debates it is possible that this article was his first introduction to phrenology in any detail.<sup>12</sup> Conveniently the article contained a list of the organs of the brain by which the faculties of the mind were said by the Drs to manifest themselves. 'It clearly defined those organs, the nature of which had been established by observation from those of which the faculties were still doubtful.'<sup>13</sup> We have already seen that it was only a few months after this article was published that Allen made his first

fumbling attempts to expound phrenology to an audience in Kirkcaldy who were eager to learn the details of this popular subject so lately come into fashion. It was Thomas Carlyle who attended and described the lecture and who afterwards read Gall and Spurzheim's book for himself. He was not much impressed.

On this occasion (the lecture in November 1817, already referred to above) he (Allen) had the honour of addressing all that was rich and fair and learned in the burgh. After considerable flourishing he ventured to produce this child of the Drs' brain — and truly it seemed a very Sooterkin.<sup>14</sup> I have since looked into the Drs' book ['Physiognomical System'] and if possible the case is worse. Certainly it is not true that our intellectual and moral and physical powers are jumbled in such huge disorder [...] Nevertheless (he) has converted the lieges of Kirkcaldy. So strong is the desire which we all feel of knowing the character, talents and disposition of our neighbour [...] Craniology will find many believers. And why not?

'Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur'. (If the people want to be deceived let them be deceived).<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.1.2 George Combe's Influence On The Growth Of Phrenology

The next major step in phrenology's development took place in 1826. George Combe privately circulated his essay *On Human Responsibility as Affected by Phrenology* and two years later published his best selling *The Constitution of Man considered in relation to External Objects*. Both works developed Spurzheim's ideas, extending them to their limits, turning phrenology into a life philosophy affecting politics, society and religion. His book was very influential in forming popular thought and opinions, finding its way into the homes of working-class people, where generally no other book but the Bible was read. Between October 1835 and October 1840, sixty-four thousand copies of Chamber's 'Peoples' Edition' of *The Constitution of Man* were sold in Britain.<sup>16</sup> The implication that the development of the superior cerebral faculties could lead to genius, whereas the development of inferior faculties could lead to criminality was clear to anyone who read the book. These implications were taken further: 'Gall and Spurzheim had lain stress on anatomy, claiming not that it was the source of their discoveries, but that it strongly confirmed them. Combe was to rely on Anatomy hardly at all [...] Phrenology was above all a "stupendous discovery in relation to the moral world."' In his first address to the Edinburgh Phrenological Society Combe said the real value of phrenology was: 'A mighty engine [...] for analysis in morals, ethics and political economy.'<sup>17</sup>

It was the beginning of what Carlyle called the mechanical age in which: 'Except the external, there are no true sciences; that to the inward world (if there be any) our only conceivable road is through the outward; that in short what cannot be investigated and understood mechanically, cannot be investigated and understood at all.'<sup>18</sup>

### 4.1.3 The Attraction Of Combe's Social Policies

Combe, though a gradualist, had the mind of the most revolutionary radical. His biographer quoted him as saying:

I believe that men collectively, when enlightened and trained will go right and promote their own happiness and hence that all churches and oligarchies that pretend to reign over either the mind or properties of mankind permanently ought to be overthrown. [...] I therefore advocate very liberal sentiments as principles to be ultimately carried into practice, but am moderate as to the time and means.<sup>19</sup>

Phrenology, thus expressed, proposed profound changes in society, the labour market and established religion. It was the accepted view that society created the division of labour, but phrenologists believed in a natural social order, based on interaction between naturally gifted, i.e. phrenologically endowed, individuals. Combe wrote: 'The Creator [...] has bestowed different combinations of the mental faculties on different individuals and thereby given them [...] the desire and aptitude for different occupations. Neither was society responsible for individual conscientiousness, which was not a factitious sentiment reared up by society [...] but a primitive power having its specific organ.'<sup>20</sup>

In 1831 Combe was a member of the Edinburgh Reform Committee and was commended for his efforts to elevate the lower classes by means of education. His ideas on education, however, were extremely radical. He wrote: 'Break the spell of teaching only abstract morality and religious feeling from the pulpit and fairly commence a system of teaching anatomy, physiology and mental philosophy as the ground works.'<sup>21</sup>

In the hands of authority, whether political or social, phrenology was essentially a manipulative doctrine of social control. In the hands of the individual it was a self-help technique. The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, the Lit & Phil Societies and the Mechanics' Institutes all eventually took phrenology on board for discussion, understanding and, by most, promotion. In dealing with criminals, children, oppressed classes, factory operatives and the insane, phrenology had a diagnostic role — revealing individuals' weaknesses, bad tendencies and their potential strengths. For these, counterbalancing treatment could be given, such as environmental changes, education and the encouraging of social interaction.

How fully Allen grasped phrenology's importance across all the varied fields where it was applied, such as economics, prison reform etc., we do not know, but he certainly saw its importance in medicine and education. In his own discussions on both subjects he quoted Combe. He agreed with Combe

in his stress on individualism and criticised the catechetical rote techniques of the prevailing educational systems, though he made only brief mention of phrenology in his *Essay on the Classification of the Insane*. Unlike Combe's deism — acknowledgement of a distant Creator-God — Allen continued to believe in the Christian Gospel, as the sermons he later published were to show. Phrenology was of most importance for him in the treatment of the insane. He had been putting phrenology to practical use in this field for seven years before *The Constitution of Man* was published.

#### **4.1.4 Phrenology In The Treatment Of The Insane**

##### **4.1.4.1 Its suitability**

The cause of mental disease had been at issue for decades before the advent of phrenology. After the publication of Gall and Spurzheims' book in 1815, as psychological traits gradually came to be associated with specific organs of the brain, disease of specific organs came to be seen as the reason for dysfunction of the mind. Thus phrenology supported the assumption, already held by many, that mental illness had a physical cause. The unbalanced mind and the resultant defective emotions and morals could be incorporated into the realm of physical treatment offered to a malfunctioning body. Clearest of all was the explanation given for Monomania — when the patient suffered from irrationality on one subject only. Phrenology gave the answer: for example, sexual obsession resulted from disease of the organ of Amativeness, or religious mania from disease in the organ of Veneration.

The fact that the relevant cerebral organs, delineated according to the phrenological 'map', when examined, often showed no signs of disease fuelled believe that early treatment of the insane while there was as yet merely functional disorder, prevented structural deterioration in the brain, which developed if treatment was delayed. (That early treatment was vitally essential was one of Matthew Allen's strongest themes in his book *Essay on the Classification of the Insane*.) Phrenology having indicated the area of malfunction, it then became the task of the doctor to stimulate the healthy organs to action and to suppress the activities of the diseased areas. Dr John Conolly brought phrenology to bear in the same way when considering prevention of mental illness well in advance of the onset of disease, arguing that: 'Those who most exercise the faculties of their minds are least liable to insanity [...] a brain strengthened by rational exercise [...] is but little likely to be attacked by disease [...] and thus the larger half of the evil is removed.'

that is, therapy that was used to influence the patients' behaviour and emotions — or in modern terms psychological treatment. Phrenology and moral regimes could then both be used to treat what was seen at base as a physical disorder of the cerebral organs. As Cooter notes: 'By "surfacing" character, legitimacy was given to the repression of deeper feelings of abstract or speculative thought and metaphysical concerns of the soul [...] like social history badly done phrenology had everything to do with outer reality and nothing at all to do with inner structures of thought.'<sup>23</sup> Many physicians had feared that the successful use of moral treatment would take mental illness out of the hands of the medical practitioner altogether. Now its combination with phrenology, as an anatomical psychology, kept mental disease within the province of medical treatment. Note, however, that in this matter Allen came to differ from the general opinion held in England that the basic cause of insanity was physical i.e. that insanity was a brain disease which adversely affected the moral or psychological functions. He favoured the view that the *initial* cause was a moral or psychological one, which resulted in deranged brain faculties: 'In every case, we believe, [...] either directly or indirectly the cause to be moral [...] We [...] heartily join the continental authors who advocate the side of moral causes.'<sup>24</sup>

Many of the best known and most successful alienists who practised in the 1830s and 40s and beyond gave credit to phrenology, despite the fact that its scientific basis was becoming more and more questionable with the advance of anatomical and neurological study. In 1836 William Ellis, while superintendent of Hanwell Asylum wrote to George Combe: 'I candidly own that until I had been acquainted with phrenology, I had no solid basis on which I could ground any treatment for the cure of the disease of insanity.'<sup>25</sup> At about the same time W. A. F. Browne, then superintendent of the asylum at Montrose in Scotland, was making similar assertions: 'Insanity can neither be understood, nor described, nor treated by the aid of any other philosophy [than Phrenology]. I have long entertained this opinion; I have for many years put it to the test of experiment, and I now wish to record it as my deliberate conviction.'<sup>26</sup>

If based on a false understanding of the brain, why were claims such as these made that it helped in the treatment of insanity? What did make a difference in treating the insane was that phrenology required alienists to take an interest in their patients' individual personalities. This, as Matthew Allen had already found, sometimes led to the discovery of the cause of an individual's suffering, which in turn pointed to an obvious cure.



#### 4.1.4.2 Phrenology in the Asylum — Its Practice by Allen

The harshness of the previous regimes in asylums was seen by phrenologists to have stimulated the inferior faculties of the brain through fear and resentment. More gentle approaches through reasoning and persuasion, which called upon the use of superior brain faculties, became the standard practice of advanced asylum care. Gall noted: 'The great point always is to divert the attention of the patient from the object of his insanity, by fixing it upon other objects.'<sup>27</sup> This was the work of the asylum superintendent and his staff, to be continually calling the healthy faculties of the brain into use by encouraging patients' involvement with creative activities around the house and grounds, with new intellectual pursuits and with social inter-activity with other patients. Phrenologists required that their advice for schools and prisons should likewise be applied to asylums — 'That the asylum become a carefully regulated moral hospital whose special environment could be manipulated for redirecting, training and strengthening specific mental organs.'<sup>28</sup>

Matthew Allen began to put these principles into practice at the York Asylum and was enabled more fully to do so at his own private institution later on. He admits that while at York he at first still made use of the restraints of the old regime, for example the swinging chair. These methods were soon put aside for more gentle persuasive treatment.

Allen became one of a main core of medical practitioners who lectured on, wrote about and put phrenology into practice in asylums in Britain. However, despite the fact that his asylum at High Beech has been described as: 'A madhouse that was said to be informed by progressive phrenological principles, (and) was regarded as a model of its kind.'<sup>29</sup> The information about his use of phrenology at High Beech is fairly scant. Its virtues are never explained or defended in his textbook. Its use is simply taken for granted.

A vast, unceasing attempt was made by superintendent and staff to stimulate the brain faculties of the patients at High Beech. In his own written works and in eyewitness accounts ample evidence is given of regular physical activities out of doors for all Allen's patients who were in a fit state to participate. Responsibilities were given to the patients for managing the household. The learning of new languages and the translation of already known ones by the well educated, took place, along with participation in musical, literary, sporting and religious activities and the encouraging of social ones, such as eating with guests from outside the asylum and visiting in the local community. In the case of over excited patients, quietness, rest and isolation from social life in and out of the asylum was encouraged in order to bring balance to the cerebral faculties.

In conjunction with this well-controlled environment Allen did carry out phrenological examinations and observations on many of his patients. In his books he made sketches of his patients' skulls and added diagnostic comments in footnotes concerning their weaknesses and strengths of personality. According to Andrew Combe, medical doctor and brother to George Combe, it was possible for the physician to discover patients' natural dispositions so accurately that they could know what were the most likely points of attack in their mental constitutions.<sup>30</sup> Such phrenological assessment by Allen indicated to him what direction individual treatment should take; for example one of his assessments was as follows:

The organs of self-esteem and benevolence are well developed, Cautiousness defective; indeed the whole head agrees admirably with what I should conceive his character has been; and from what I have seen and heard characterises his family [...] He is soonest roused and offended, though otherwise very good-natured, by whatever questions his own importance.<sup>31</sup>

For such a case the necessary give-and-take of the social life of the asylum would have been used by Allen as therapeutic, encouraging the patient to balance his self-esteem with consideration for his fellow patients. Allen's task would have been to bring balance into this patient's social relationships, developing the faculty of cautiousness, with encouragement to think first before acting and speaking and demanding his own way. This has many similarities with what he wrote about child training and the use of phrenology.

#### 4.1.4.3 Progression of his Views

Allen's views on phrenology and its use seem to have been continually evolving — perhaps as he saw the scientific evidence for it being gradually eroded and as he became more convinced that insanity had largely moral causes. For example he said in a footnote in his book in 1831: 'I denounce and almost deprecate the word — organ. They are external forms representative of internal states of mind; and even in this I would be understood as not pledging myself to the present names and divisions, as being that which time will determine, and which in nature is true.'<sup>32</sup> It might seem that in the 1830s Allen began to lose faith in phrenology; for example, in 1837 in his initial assessment of the poet John Clare, (the only written assessment of a new arrival at High Beech that remains), he wrote nothing at all about phrenological evidence.<sup>33</sup> In that same year in his *Essay on the Classification of the Insane* he wrote nothing specifically about phrenology, only acknowledging his use of it in the footnotes of his book — suggesting perhaps an attitude of temporary indecision regarding it. By the following year he had reconsidered the subject. He addressed a meeting of the Anthropological Society of London and his lecture called *What is Truth?* was published in October 1838.<sup>34</sup> The substance of this lecture was discussed in chapter three under the

heading of Allen's expanding ideas about moral causation of insanity. At the same time he made clear his revised stance on phrenology. He obviously still held to the basic concept of phrenology:

The brain is not only the organ of the mind, but it consists of parts or portions devoted to different offices, and having specific functions to perform. [...] The healthiest and safest state is, when each part or function has its relative and appropriate share of activity. This is reversed in cases of mental derangement. The control over undue excitement, or the power to command a dormant faculty is lost. [...] If these states of mind continue physical effects may sooner or later follow [...] this state of disordered action may at last produce disease, or, it may only be, in the first instance, that it produces such a condition of nervous energy, that the disordered action degenerates into habit, and becomes permanent, without actual disorganisation of the substance of the brain.' etc.<sup>35</sup>

He also interpreted phrenology in the light of his own theories, and his belief in One Grand Universal Principle, as he did with everything else. He observed that: 'What we call the nervous energy is an influence or modification of the power, which operates everywhere; [...] The diversified phenomena and effects depend upon the diversified forms, through which it operates.'<sup>36</sup> Here the words 'diversified forms' seem to replace the old concept of *different organs*. He held an open mind on organology and had moved on from the rigid delineation of functions by Gall and Spurzheim, which he seemed to have come to regard as too simple a concept. Of the brain he says, obviously with the researches of Drs Gall and Spurzheim in mind, 'We have now more perfect knowledge of its mechanical arrangement' though he is uncertain about their conclusions as he continues: 'Few have any conception of the specific purposes or functions which these arrangements serve, or of the mode or order of the operation [...] which they are destined to manifest.'<sup>(52)</sup> Though he acknowledged the anatomical advances made by Gall and Spurzheim, by the late 1830s, he considered the science of mind as hardly having begun to be understood.

#### **4.1.4.4 Phrenology and the Possible Effects on Allen Personally**

There is little doubt that in 1817 when he first lectured on phrenology that Matthew Allen had monetary gain as his aim. He was in desperate financial straits. In 1824, when Oswald Allen refused to allow Matthew to use his holiday house as a private asylum, Matthew left York saying that there was more money to be made in phrenology anyway. Oswald always drew out the worst in his brother. By then Matthew assuredly believed in phrenology for itself, as well as its moneymaking potential.

At this point certain things took place (See sections 3.3 and 3.4) which had a deep and lasting effect on the life of Matthew Allen. It does seem that phrenology itself also brought about important changes in the way that Allen looked at his fellow human beings (his need to study his patients as individuals as mentioned above). It has already been noted that Oswald Allen complained of his brother's

naïveté, his inability to judge the character of men with whom he made business deals and the frequency with which he turned friends into enemies. Phrenology would have helped Matthew to focus on the psychology and character of the individual and to react accordingly. It also might well have encouraged him to look at his own character, to see his weaknesses and his potential strengths. Phrenology promised to provide at a stroke solutions to the mysteries of character, personality, talent or lack of it, crime and madness.<sup>37</sup>

Allen needed a salve to overcome the pain of past relationships and failures. For the narrow critical attitude of the sect in which he had been raised he now found an alternative philosophy, at the centre of which was forbearance towards one's fellow man and a belief in a potential for change. A contemporary alienist and craniologist, Disney Alexander, described phrenology in the following terms: 'A more accurate and comprehensive view of Man in his individual and social capacities has been obtained [...] a new lesson of candour, forbearance, liberality and moderation in our estimate of each others' character and conduct has been inculcated.'<sup>38</sup> Phrenological understanding alone did not of course bring about immediate change in Allen or anyone else, but it encouraged an enlightened process of self-help.

By 1824-25, when Allen delivered two or three major lecture series before settling at High Beech, he could speak with the clear conviction of his own experience — which certainly did much to spread belief in phrenology. The success of his lectures no doubt increased his self-confidence. While lecturing he met for the first time a circle of fellow mad-doctors and practitioners of phrenology who considered him a friend and colleague and treated him as an equal. He remained part of this circle for the rest of his life. From his first arrival in London in 1824 he met with fellow members of the London Phrenological Society. In Wakefield he met William Ellis and Disney Alexander. The latter claimed he was encouraged to take up phrenology by the inspiring lectures of Matthew Allen in Wakefield, Leeds, Sowerby Bridge and elsewhere.<sup>39</sup> For Allen's relationship with William Ellis see section 5.3.1.2 on p146.

## 4.2 Lectures on Phrenology 1824-1825

### **4.2.1 Success In Hull October — November 1824.**

The Literary and Philosophical Society in Hull had been established in November 1822. In their *First and Second Annual Report* we read that they invited Dr Allen to give, 'A series of five lectures at 12s 6d '40 He drew audiences of around one hundred to one hundred and twenty ladies and gentlemen each night. The *Hull and Rockingham Advertiser* was favourable in its report:

Very great pleasure was experienced and unbounded applause manifested. They, however, questioned the wisdom of his enthusiasm and his ardent feelings which in no small degree operate on his deduction and bias his reasoning. It was in his favour that he was neither dogmatical nor illiberal. Fully convinced himself, of the proofs and merits of phrenology, he cautions the learner against too great haste in making up his mind. The newspaper could see no harm in his teaching and believed that he had convinced some of its truth.<sup>41</sup>

The *Hull Weekly Advertiser* refrained from editorial comment but published columns of correspondence from both supporters of Allen and from anti-phrenologists. One supporter, having been a subscriber for the complete course, quoted Allen from memory and from notes he had taken. Thus we have in the newspaper a partial outline of what Allen's lectures contained — though space ran out before the correspondent could cover all five lectures. Allen began by expressing his ardent attachment to the cause of truth, which alone induced him to appear in Hull as the advocate of phrenology. He proceeded to remark on the prejudice and opposition which phrenology had had to encounter. In defence of phrenologists he noted:

They neither prejudice nor condemn that which they neither know nor understand — they believe that the facts and principles of their system are to be found in nature — they refer not to the speculations of the closet — to the refinements of the imagination, but to existing phenomena — they avow that they make and invent nothing in science and strongly urge the students to be cautiously on their guard against hasty conclusions deduced from general principles [...] to beware of mistaking that which is merely different in degree for that which is different in kind [...] It is not in the fleeting fluctuations of fashionable opinion that [...] wise men expect to arrive at truth.<sup>42</sup>

The newspaper provides the first evidence that Allen was aware of the deeper philosophical arguments surrounding phrenology; of ideas concerning theories of 'mind' held long before the conclusions arrived at by Dr Gall. He said in imitation of the latter: 'The ancient and modern metaphysicians [...] entirely failed to afford us correct views of the nature of man, or any certain method to guide us in forming a due estimate of the nature and powers of the human mind.'<sup>43</sup> Allen discounted the value of Physiognomy, which was held by some to be more effective: 'This could only be considered as an index to the feelings within, when found on the face of unsophisticated innocence; and in the present state of man it can seldom be depended on.'<sup>44</sup>

In his second and third lecture the Doctor, 'Laboured to prove that the functions of the mind are discharged by the brain [...] every manifestation of these faculties depends, like seeing and hearing, on separate and distinct parts of the brain, that these are the seats of the different functions of the mind.'<sup>45</sup> Allen then showed his awareness that such thinking tended to lead to accusations of materialism — seeing mind and soul as a material by-product of the brain:

In whatever state the Almighty has willed the present and future existence of the soul, in that state most assuredly it does and will exist [...] phrenology favours the notion that the soul is something distinct from matter. [...] this [...] being one of the secrets of God, which like the Ark have a sacredness about them that renders it fatal to those who dare to defile them with their unhallowed touch.<sup>46</sup>

The same newspaper contained a letter from an anti-phrenologist whose argument was mostly against Gall and Spurzheim's system of organology: 'All the parts of the skull being now appropriated to some faculty or another, there is not left room even for the love of eating and drinking, to go no further in the long catalogue of omissions.'<sup>47</sup> The critic admits to having 'Waded through the writings of Spurzheim, Combe and the rest' and clearly accuses phrenology of the error of materialism. It is, 'Nothing but a threadbare cloak awkwardly thrown over the dangerous, although absurd, doctrines of Priestley and the Materialists.'<sup>48</sup> It is far from clear, however, whether he himself ever heard Allen speak. It would appear he already had a closed mind on the subject. He does not mention Allen by name but gives a hint that he would classify him amongst other figures common on the itinerant lecture circuit at that time: 'A system which leads to such absurdities, is utterly destitute of all pretensions to the name of science, and should be professed only by animal magnetisers, modern miracle mongers, and strolling fortune tellers — into which latter class I find some of the phrenological professors have already degenerated.'<sup>49</sup> It was a valid criticism. All the evidence points to the fact that Allen constantly verged on the edge of 'showmanship'. His manner drew the crowds wherever he went. The press commented on his enthusiasm and the Annual Report of the Literary and Philosophical Society said that his lectures were 'Illustrated by casts and engravings'.<sup>50</sup> His lecturing 'apprenticeship' had been in chemistry with its fascinating, demonstrable reactions of gases, minor explosions, bright lights and steaming liquids. Some have also expressed the view that Allen's motives were purely remunerative.<sup>51</sup> How seriously then could he be taken, or the subject on which he lectured? Was he a confidence trickster? By what we know of the contents of his lectures, his use of phrenology in the treatment of the insane, and by what he later wrote in his books and articles, he did firmly believe in his subject. However, his personality probably did more to charm his audiences, as well as bring healing to his patients, than phrenology ever did.

Whatever the success rate or otherwise of converts to phrenology the series of lectures raised interest and debate on the subject and his hosts, the Hull Lit & Phil Society were satisfied. They made Dr Matthew Allen an honorary member of the society, a compliment accorded to few others, apart from such eminent speakers as Dr Spurzheim who lectured in Hull three years later in 1827.

#### 4.2.2 An Interim In The South Of England

Allen must have ended his time in Hull on a high note for by then, far sooner than he dreamed, he could put into action his plan for his own asylum. In his *Essay on the Classification of the Insane* he says he spent several weeks looking at properties around London and fixed on the ground and houses at High Beech as the best adapted, in any part of the country which he saw, to carry into effect his views on the treatment of the insane.<sup>52</sup> The success of his venture was to prove this correct. Secluded yet not too far from neighbours, with a beautiful aspect, room for separate accommodation to carry out the classification of his patients, and with miles of woodland where his patients could take exercise away from public gaze, the property appears to have had the added advantage of being previously owned by a relative.

The land tax returns show that, before Allen's ownership, the land and houses had belonged to Allen/Wilson — Wilson was his mother's maiden name. No one in York or Gayle seems to have had connection with this land in Essex and it seems most likely that his relatives in Kirby Lonsdale in Cumbria, John Allen and Edward Wilson, the latter of whom had lent Matthew some of the money to buy the chemical works in Leith, were the joint owners. A friend of Edward Wilson, named Dent, spent a year at High Beech with Matthew in 1829 — it is not clear if he was a patient or a staff worker.<sup>53</sup> There is no evidence that there was ever any debt attached to the purchase. There was, however, a tenant living on the property, a Mr Morley. Allen and his small group of patients shared his tenancy with him for a year and it seems to indicate that there was more than one house on the land from the beginning. Within one month of Allen's leaving Hull the first patient, David Beattie, moved in on 6 December 1824. On 5 January 1825 they were joined by Jane Beattie and three weeks later on 30 January by another patient from the York Asylum, Mary Ann Headstone, aged forty-two, wife of Lieut. Headstone RN.<sup>54</sup> We do not know how rapidly or slowly the numbers increased as the lists of patients for that period only specify those who remained until 1832 and after. There is no record of patients who came and were discharged again before 1832.

We do not know what staff he employed in the early days but amongst them would perhaps have been a carer for his children who, now that he at last had a home for them, joined the life at High Beech Asylum. Matthew Oswald, fourteen, Mary Ann, twelve, and Thomas, nine, must have added much needed cheer and created something of a family atmosphere. Such an atmosphere was Allen's aim from the very earliest days:

When I first came to Leopard's Hill Lodge I contrived the best way I could with my means, to have

a family and front part of the house, independent of the galleries [...] at all the houses we have had parties in the front part, who would in their conduct and pursuits, and social enjoyments put to shame many families who are reckoned perfectly sane [...] amusements of cards, chess, billiards, cricket etc. [...] a little world of interest better suited [...] to the state of the inhabitants than the real world could be to them.<sup>55</sup>

### 4.2.3 His Further Lectures On Phrenology

In February 1825 Allen had to travel North to fulfil an engagement to give a series of seven lectures at the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. The first meetings in Leeds had had to be hurriedly postponed when Allen took up an invitation to speak at the Mechanics' Institute in London.

#### 4.2.3.1 Leeds

Allen had become known to the members of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, through some early papers which he had written and which were read to the society by two young doctors from the Leeds Infirmary. The first, communicated by Dr Thackrah and read by Dr Hunter was entitled *The Effects of Atmospheric Changes on Health and Spirits* at a meeting on 21 March 1823. The second, which was read on 21 November of the same year, was entitled *On the natural divisions of Insanity, and the question of how far the Mind retains or exhibits its former individuality of character, and how much it is altered; and the Kind and Degree and Mode of that alteration.*<sup>56</sup> When Allen was unable to keep his appointment and commence his lectures on phrenology in Leeds at the beginning of February 1825, the council of the Society declined them altogether. Allen subsequently presented himself at a council meeting and apologised and explained his delay. The report of the Fifth Session of the Society states:

A course of lectures on the curious doctrines of phrenology having been offered by Dr Allen, and very urgently solicited by several members, your council conceived they should act in conformity with the liberal views of the society by affording to those who felt interested in the enquiry an opportunity of investigating that much agitated subject. Dr Allen's lectures were accordingly delivered in March and proved very attractive.<sup>57</sup>

The *Leeds Intelligencer* of 10 March listed the dates of the seven lectures that Allen was to give, commencing at 7pm, cost of each lecture three shillings, and for the whole course sixteen shillings. The percentage of the takings paid to the lecturer is not mentioned.

The crowds which Allen drew were notable and in 1836 — eleven years later — Hewitt C. Watson wrote that they were better attended than any other course of lectures before or since.<sup>58</sup> The *Leeds Mercury* commented after the first three lectures that they: 'Have been in a great measure introductory, being intended to remove the general objection to phrenology, to show that there are Prima Facie strong



probabilities in its favour. The ensuing lectures will fully develop the system of Messrs Gall and Spurzheim and the [...] organs marked upon the skull will be separately remarked upon.' <sup>59</sup> The paper carried comments on the lectures but there was no long and detailed correspondence as there had been in Hull. The same objections were made, however: firstly that Physiognomy was a better science — 'The countenance (is) a much better index of the mind. The mind changes by the benign influence of the Christian principle upon it, while the shape of the skull remains comparatively unaltered.' Secondly that Phrenology leads to Fatalism:

The science [...] may not hurt but even benefit a good man, because he knowing what are his predominant dispositions to evil, will guard the more carefully against them: but it is to be feared it will make a bad man worse — by producing in his mind the erroneous idea of fatalism, thus reconciling him to the evil, which it is his duty to overcome. <sup>60</sup>

The report of the *Leeds Intelligencer* after the fourth meeting was much more scathing: 'We are no converts to the preposterous humbug Phrenology, but we do not, however, with some of our grave contemporaries, apprehend any serious mischief from its cultivation. It is too ridiculous to be noxious.' The paper was, however, much less convincing, as it admitted that none of their reporters had actually bothered to attend the meetings. They then quoted from a 'striking' report in another paper

It is an admitted fact in natural history, that the number of faculties increases from the lowest animal up to the highest gifted man, in proportion to the multiplication of the cerebral parts; to convince ourselves of the truth of this it is only necessary to glance at Lavater's<sup>6</sup> or Campers imperfect scale from the frog to the Apollo Belvidere. (This scale the lecturer exhibited to the audience and pointed out the progressive change in the inclination of the facial line, from a nearly horizontal to a perpendicular direction.) Dr Allen then described the various parts of the head in which different portions of the brain preponderate in different animals, according to their contrary habits and propensities and proceeded to contrast them with the nobler conformation of the brain of man

They were adamant in their conclusion: 'Some of the Doctor's arguments were highly ingenious but we are disposed to believe he will make very few converts to his system in Leeds.' <sup>61</sup> The conclusions of the *Mercury* after the fourth meeting were gentler but of no more convincing nature:

We do not presume to give an opinion on the merits of this science but we must say that Dr Allen has rendered it at least plausible and that he has in the course of his extensive observation [...] met with some very remarkable confirmations of his opinions. The lectures are characterised by great candour though we think that they show the enthusiasm and lively fancy of the lecturer have sometimes induced him to view possibilities as probabilities and probabilities as certainties. It is quite obvious that the science cannot be considered established until an almost infinite number of observations have been made and severe tests withstood. It is also somewhat difficult to convince a Phrenologist of error as it is possible that a natural propensity may have been counteracted by education or circumstances, though when the form of the skull has once become decided, its marks

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<sup>6</sup> \*Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801) Swiss poet, theologian and student of physiognomy. Author of *Essai sur la Physiognomie*, 1782.

cannot we presume be materially altered. The merits of the science therefore are not very easily ascertained and unless the shape of the skull changes with the character the use of phrenology will not be great. Dr Allen's lectures are valuable for the excellent observations they contain on the human mind and character which he has studied in a vast variety of examples.<sup>62</sup>

How effective was Allen in promoting phrenology? There is more evidence, besides the display of Camper's facial profile scale, that Allen used devices and visual aids to entertain his audiences in Leeds, as in Hull, and that, apart from the novelty of his subject, his showmanship, natural ability as an orator and his effervescent personality did much to attract large audiences. His lectures titillated the interest of his hearers, gave them a good evening's entertainment, supplied them with a broad outline of the subject which enabled them to exhibit their knowledge on a conversational level, but they were not of material of which scholars could make great use. He said nothing of the social effects of phrenology which would be promoted by George Combe a few years later. Eight months later on 2 December 1825 the Reverend Richard Hamilton addressed the same Philosophical and Literary Society on 'Craniology' and gave a scathing and satirical attack against phrenology. Though not actually naming Dr Allen he makes the following comment:

I recollect an experiment or two of a singular nature which was performed a little time since in this hall [...] The worthy lecturer gave us specimens how the head was managed by us in various instances of conduct. In pride we toss our head. In cunning we slant it. No globe could be worked with greater exactness than his own *exempla gratia* head. But in bringing any place on the globe to the meridian we very rudely send many others below the horizon. And in his case, having only a vertical hemisphere to adjust, while it was day with one set of powers it was night also with the very same. Zenith and Nadir saw outspread above and below them the one invariable zone. Latitude and Longitude were set at defiance.<sup>63</sup>

Such a comment only confirms that Allen's demonstrations were what remained in the minds of his audience long after the importance of his subject had been forgotten. However, he was without doubt a pioneer and catalyst in promoting debate on the subject. Other local protagonists of phrenology took up the more serious issues in detail, after Allen had left the town.

From 1826 to 1829 a debate concerning phrenology took place in Leeds, through lectures, the press, pamphleteering and publications. Similar debates took place in the late 1820s to the early 1830s in numerous other centres. Recent investigation into phrenology has emphasised its medical history and the approach taken to it by anatomists, physiologists, neurologists and by those who treated the insane. The debate in Leeds, following soon on the heels of Allen's early lectures, was interesting in that its content was of a philosophical nature. The protagonists, the Reverend R. W. Hamilton, William Wildsmith, a

Leed's surgeon, and H. D. Inglis based their arguments on the then current ideas about mind, body and soul and the role of the brain. The former was an anti-phrenologist and accused all believers in, and practitioners of, this new science, of the errors of both materialism and fatalism. The latter two, who argued in defence of phrenology, roundly denied these errors.<sup>64</sup>

A decade later in 1836 William Wildsmith reported to Hewitt Watson on the state of phrenology in Leeds:

There is no Phrenological Society in Leeds; none has ever existed; and I am not aware that one is likely to be formed. A large proportion of the medical profession is favourable to phrenology and several individuals known for their desire for the extension of knowledge and Science. There are also many who deny the principles of phrenology, — educated persons and of accredited judgement — but who have done no more to entitle them to the appellation of “anti-phrenologist” [...] I am not aware that any one of them has read the works of Gall, Spurzheim or Combe.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.2.3.2 Wakefield

It was amongst his fellow doctors that Allen seems to have made his most lasting impression. The evidence that Allen ever went to Wakefield is slight. Our information comes from one man, Dr Disney Alexander, a general practitioner, a local preacher, and visiting physician at the Wakefield Dispensary and West Riding Asylum from 1820. He is described as an ardent phrenologist and became such, he claimed, due to the influence of Dr Allen.<sup>66</sup> In 1826 he published his essay *A lecture on Phrenology as Illustrative of Moral and Intellectual Capacities of Man*, which, the advertisement tells us, was originally meant to have been delivered before the staff of the Wakefield Dispensary. In this same lecture he comments on ‘The lectures recently delivered in this place by Dr Allen which must still be fresh in the minds of some of you.’<sup>67</sup> It is hard to know what Alexander — who was himself a member of the Leeds ‘Phil & Lit’ — meant by ‘in this place’. Was it Leeds or Wakefield and whom did he mean by ‘some of you’? It seems that he was referring to the hospital staff at Wakefield Dispensary having heard Dr Allen speak. It is reasonable to assume that Alexander had attended the lectures given by Allen in Leeds and invited him to give a private lecture to his staff. Though he does refer to lectures in the plural and that would seem to refer to the series in Leeds. It was Alexander who replied to Hewitt Watson’s enquiries about phrenology in Wakefield and said: ‘Spurzheim, Mr Levison, and I think formerly Dr Allen and once myself have lectured here; the attendance small.’<sup>68</sup>

Because of the town’s close proximity to Leeds one can conclude that Allen went there after his lecture series in Leeds in April 1825. Copies of the local paper — the *Wakefield and Halifax Journal* — for 1824 to 1826, are missing from the collection in the local studies library and as there was no Literary

and Philosophical society in Wakefield at that time there is nothing in the extant records which refers to a visit by Allen to the town.

The *Wakefield and Halifax Journal* reported in 1823 on an establishment in the town of a Phrenological Society: 'We understand that a number of gentlemen in Wakefield have formed themselves into a society for the purpose of cultivating a knowledge of Phrenology on the system of Drs Gall and Spurzheim. They have taken a spacious room in Northgate Street to meet in and have got together an interesting collection of masks, heads, etc ' <sup>69</sup> Alexander confirmed that the leading light in its beginning was Dr William Ellis then director of the West Riding Lunatic Asylum, but that it had dwindled in 1831 when Ellis moved away. <sup>70</sup>

Allen returned to his family in Epping Forest after his visit to Wakefield and as far as is known did not leave them again for any length of time to lecture in distant places. As phrenology was ultimately proven to have no sound scientific basis regarding the organs of the brain forming the shape of the skull, all the above would seem to have had no valid purpose and effect. The value of phrenology did not lie in any direct effect of, or on, the 'organs' of the brain, but in the subsequent development of an individual relationship between the alienist and his patient. The alienist was forced to see each person as an individual case and to treat him that way. It widely contributed to driving out mass treatment for lunacy— purging, blood letting etc. as referred to in chapter III, and to the development of a specific regime of treatment for each patient based on the individual patient's personality traits. It was particularly effective in bringing balance back into the lives of those with monomaniac tendencies. It fostered belief that change was possible in the attitudes and actions of the delinquents of society — from criminals to lunatics.

PART III

MEDICAL SUCCESS

CHAPTER V  
ALLEN AS ALIENIST - HIS PLACE AMONGST THE  
PROFESSIONALS

5.1 Allen's Regimen of Care

When Matthew Allen settled in Essex with his first three patients his primary concern seems to have been financial independence of everyone save his benefactor George Cooke. With the property purchased and the late tenant, Mr Morley, having departed, he set about substantially rebuilding the existing houses, having in mind not only the right kind of space for his patients, but also a suitable home to which he could bring a bride. He married for the third time c.1829. Fair Mead House and Leopard's Hill Lodge, the buildings on the property, were completely renovated by this time. The detailed architect's plans for these buildings are in the Essex County Record Office. The former was the family home which also housed convalescent patients and the latter was a house used for patients of both sexes at various times, until 1835 when Springfield, a women's residence was completed and Leopard's Hill Lodge became a residence for men only.

Allen began superintending his private asylum at a very early stage in the history of nineteenth-century lunacy. By 1824-1825, when the High Beech Asylum opened, the general understanding of insanity and its treatment had moved only an interim step away from the attitudes of the old regime. Harshness had given place to tolerance, and 'management' of the insane was being practised. This, generally, still included management by medical heroics and use of such instruments as the swinging chair, with coercion by fear and chains, as a last resort. (See p.56 for references to Warburton's Houses in 1827.) Moral treatment was a new concept, talked about, but practised by the few who had some understanding of influencing the mind of the lunatic and encouraging him to self-discipline. Non-restraint was an ideal for the future and seen by most as nothing more than an ideal, which could never be put into practice. Much of what Allen did can be given the status of pioneering work. He used methods of treatment that had been written about but only actually put into practice by Pinel and Esquirol and their pupils, in France, and at The York Retreat. To these Allen added his own ideas and plans.

The period of 1820 to 1845 in the history of lunacy treatment was one of improvement, progress

and success, if not in the understanding of the physiology of the brain and possible somatic causes of lunacy, then in the development of psychological methods which resulted in 'cures' of greater numbers than had ever been achieved before in Britain and were ever to be achieved again in the nineteenth-century. Allen was part of this progressive period and apparently achieved a forty-eight percent success rate (see Chart 5, cured plus recovered plus improved). This was average to high.

### 5.1.1 Statistics

Apart from Allen's subjective view of his work the only other source of facts about the asylum's history are found in the few documents from the Essex Court of Quarter Sessions, now in the County Record Office. These consist of a large, delicately drawn and shaded, architect's ground plan of Fair Mead House (Q/Alp3), paintings of the latter and of Leopard's Hill Lodge (Q/Al1/62&63), and a volume containing copies of the minutes of quarterly visits and Annual Reports of the Visitors in Lunacy to the Asylum (Q/Alp7). In the same book are patient lists copied from the Visitors' Book kept at the asylum with a few comments by Dr Allen. These copies were made by the Clerk of the Court of Quarter Sessions from the originals which must have been kept by the family and are now lost. Much insight into Allen's work can be gained from a careful analysis of this book. It contains the complete list of admissions and discharges from the asylum and the Visitors' Minutes for the years 1832 to 1844. For the years prior to this, that is 1824 to 1831, there are only the names of those who remained in the asylum till after 1831. Those who came and went during that period, as, for example, Mrs Dutton who will be discussed in this chapter, are not recorded. Information, which is sometimes found in other patient registers of private asylums of the period, concerning the diagnosis or apparent illness from which each patient was suffering, for example Melancholia or Dementia, is missing from the High Beech book.

Statistics can be extracted which give an overall picture of Allen's work and achievement. The above charts give the following statistics: Allen's overall rate of cure, between 1832 and 1844 appears to be forty-eight percent, which, for the time, was high, but not as high as some.<sup>1</sup> Certain features are of particular note, especially the predominant number of young adults between the ages of twenty-one and thirty — particularly young men — who were patients (chart 6). This turned out to be the clearly outstanding feature of the patient admissions (chart 4). However, as the charts show, these young men were not a group of hardened incurables. The trend breaks down in the final analysis when it is shown that in this age group of fifty three persons, decidedly more young men than women were cured, recovered or improved — (chart 6). If it could be shown, by comparison with figures from other asylums, that this was

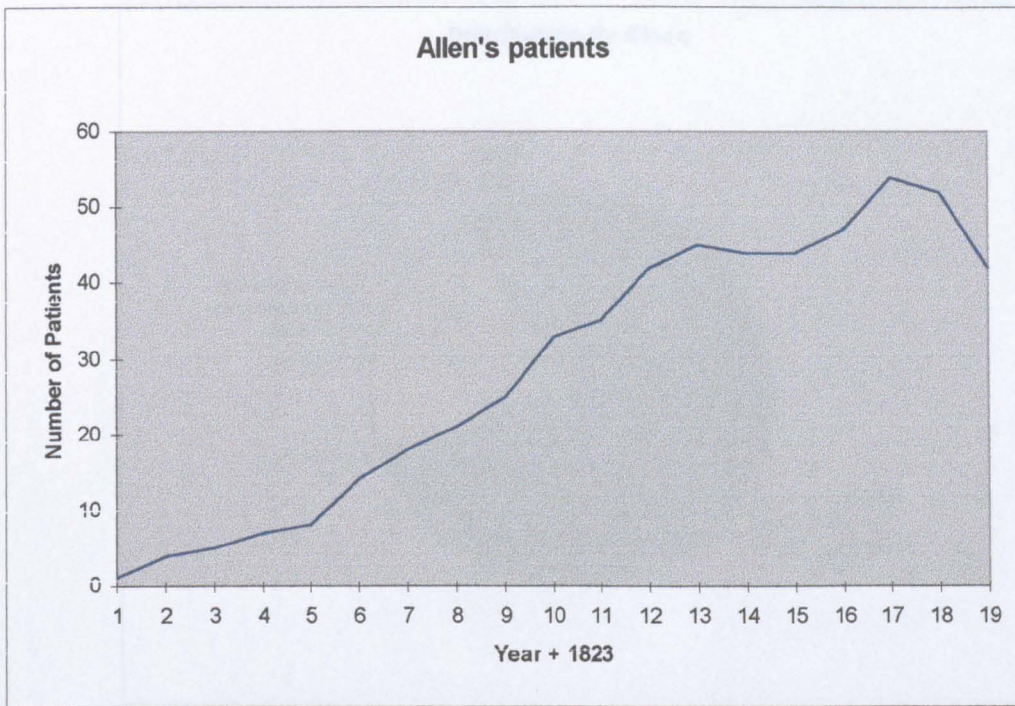


Figure 2

Chart 1

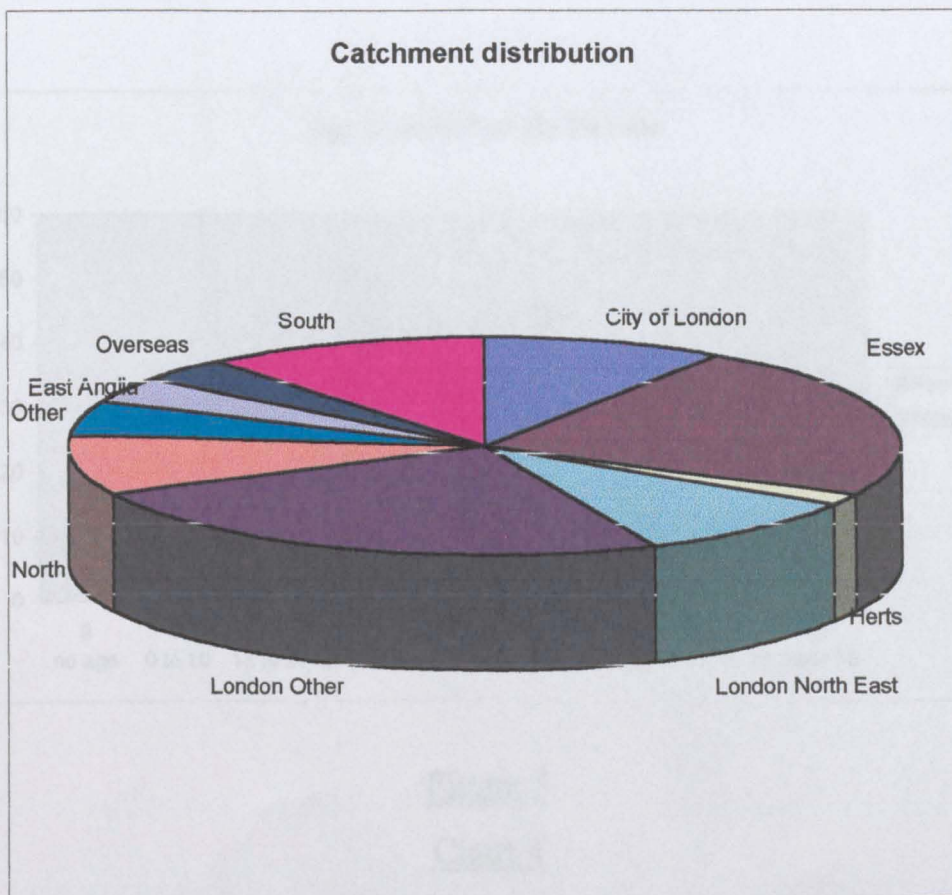


Figure 3

Chart 2



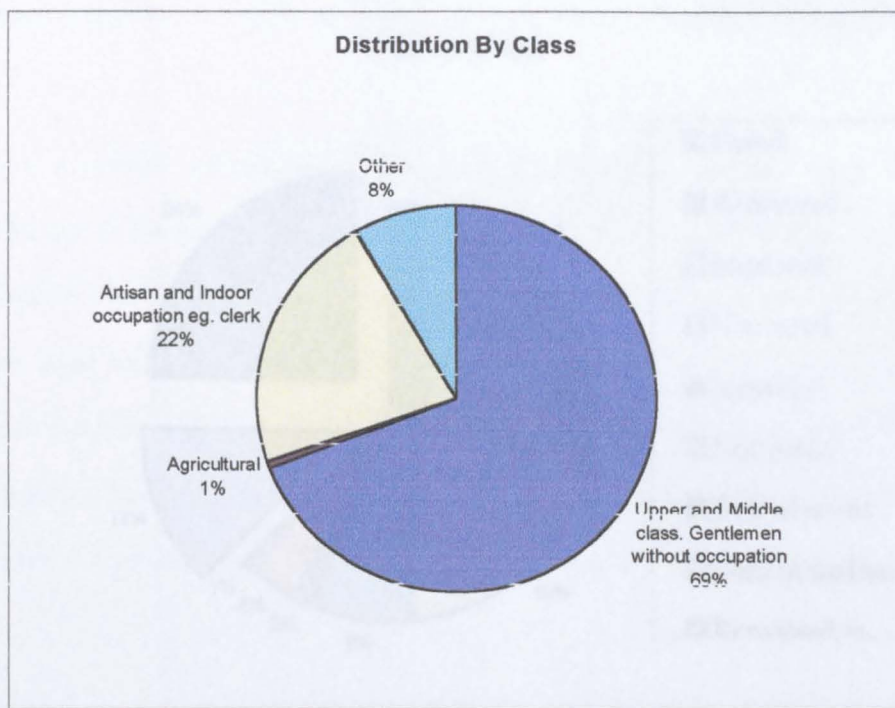


Figure 4

Chart 3

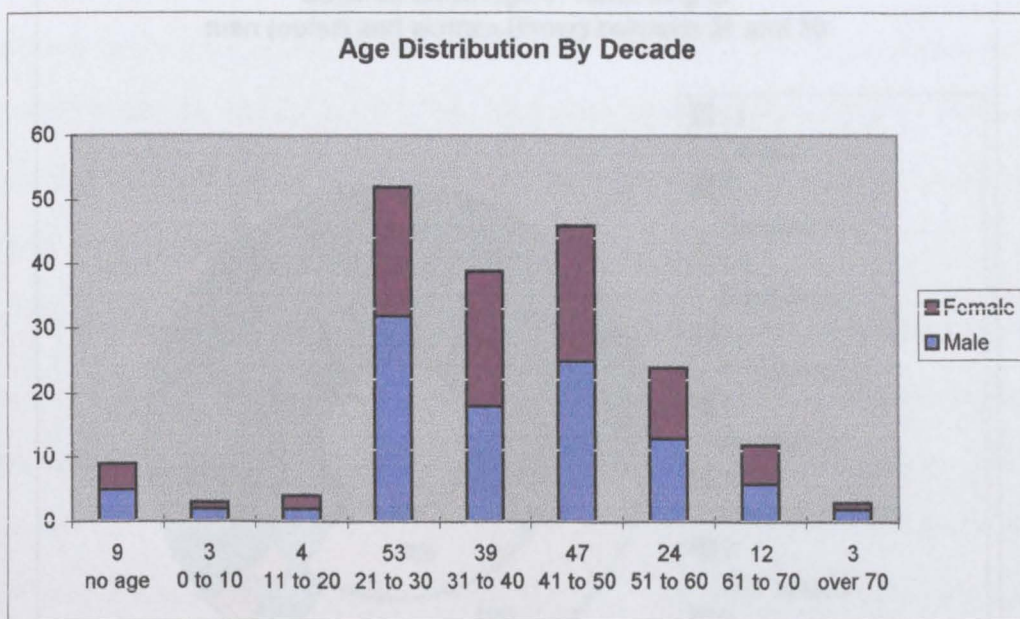


Figure 5

Chart 4

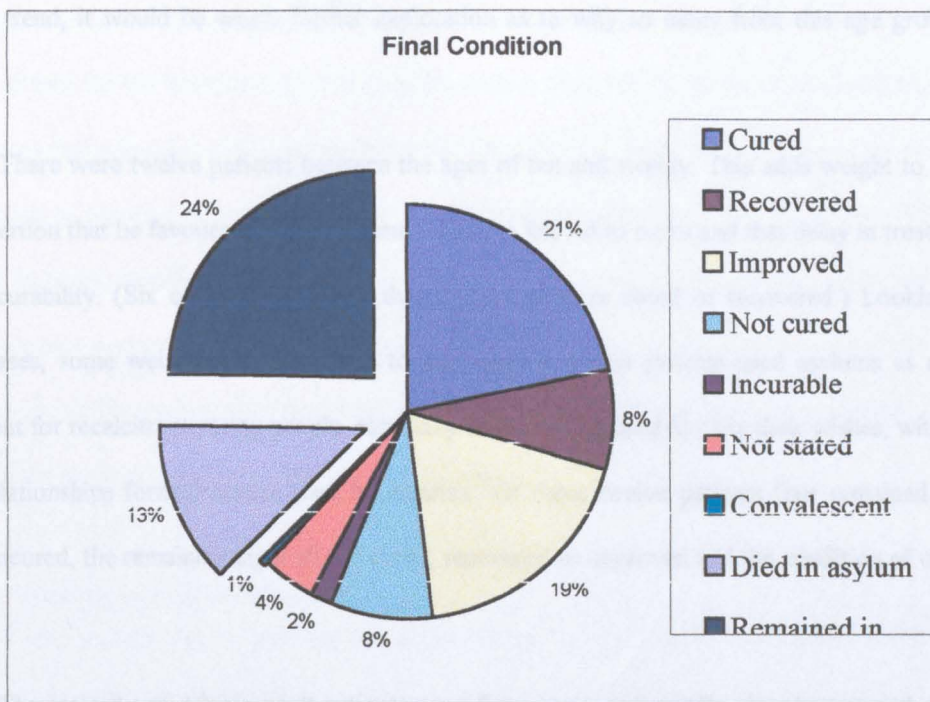


Figure 6

Chart 5

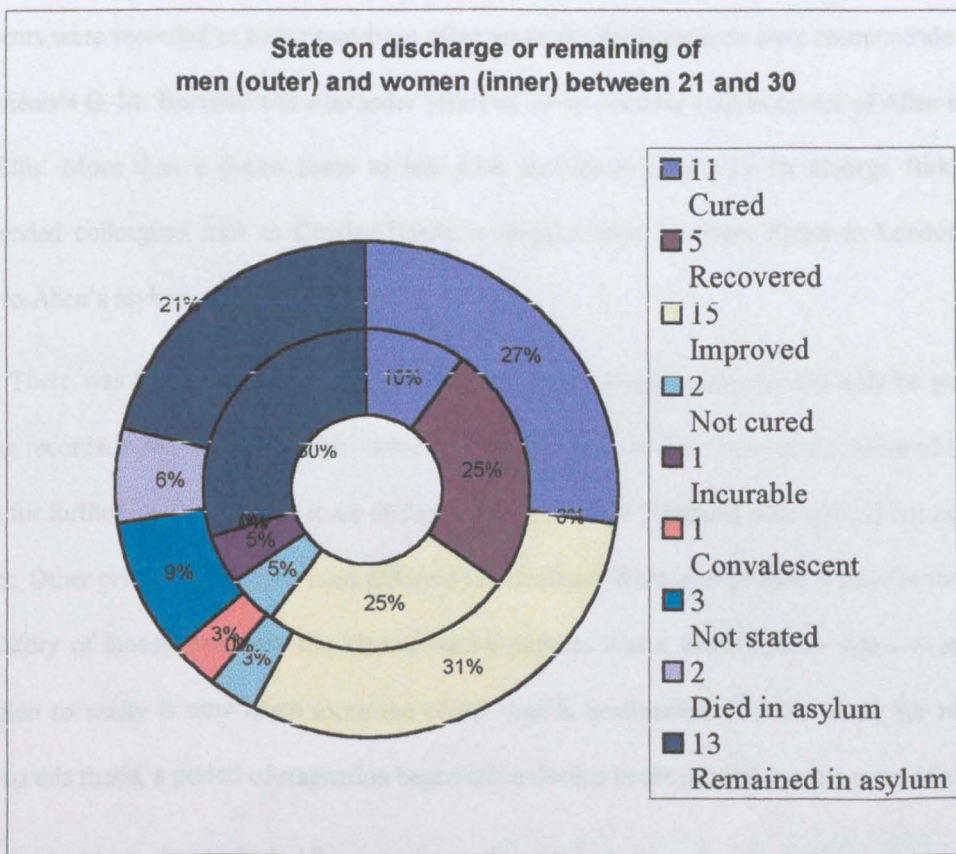


Figure 7

Chart 6

indeed a trend, it would be worth further exploration as to why so many from this age group became insane.

There were twelve patients between the ages of ten and twenty. This adds weight to Allen's oft made assertion that he favoured early treatment which he felt led to cures and that delay in treatment often led to incurability. (Six or fifty percent of these were stated as cured or recovered.) Looking at these twelve cases, some weight must be added to the suggestion that parents used asylums as a threat or punishment for recalcitrant young people, especially those who refused to obey their wishes, with regard to sexual relationships formed across class boundaries.<sup>2</sup> Of these twelve patients four remained within the asylum uncured, the remaining eight all left cured, recovered or improved and the condition of one was not stated.

The majority of Allen's adult patients were from upper and middle class homes and were drawn from the area local to High Beech, from further afield in Essex and from North East London. There were a minority of artisans and others such as clerks or warehousemen. One pauper is recorded as having been sent by the local magistrates and there were two who had no fixed abode prior to coming to the asylum. Ten patients were recorded as being sent from other asylums. Some patients were recommended by well-known alienists G. M. Burrows and Alexander Morison, or by personal acquaintances of Allen such as Dr W. C. Ellis. More than a dozen came to him with certificates signed by Dr George Birkbeck who recommended colleagues such as Charles Harris, a surgeon from Lombard Street in London, to send patients to Allen's asylum.

There was no standard way of assessing rates of 'cure' and estimates can only be gained from remaining records. Allen distinguished between 'cured' and 'recovered' in his records. Some of the 'cured' returned for further treatment while some of the merely 'recovered' remained well and did not need further treatment. Other private institutions used different terminology. What is important is that for the first time in the history of lunacy treatment the idea of curing patients was a viable option. Allen wrote in 1838 'Restoration to sanity is now much more the object than is confinement.'<sup>3</sup> After 1845, for reasons not relevant to this thesis, a period of stagnation began and a decline in the general success rates of asylums.

An incident, about which Allen wrote a small book,<sup>4</sup> serves well as a starting point to describing life under Dr Allen's regime, as it includes details of care and treatment vital to understanding both Allen himself and the broader subject of asylum care in general. In the Chelmsford Quarter Sessions of 1832 the

case of Allen versus Dutton was heard. Dr Matthew Allen brought a suit against Mr Dutton for the non-payment of fees for the board and treatment of his wife at High Beech Asylum from April to October of 1831. Dutton had refused to pay the fees saying that Dr Allen had neglected his wife and put her into poor accommodation, because he had decided she was a chronic incurable case. 'At the request of his friends'<sup>5</sup>, Allen published the details of his dispute with Mr Dutton — a case which has been described as nothing more than 'a storm in a teacup'.<sup>6</sup> To Allen, however, a clear vindication of his treatment of the insane and the removal of all innuendo arising from Dutton's accusations was vital to his very livelihood, as well as to the reputation of the developing profession of mad-doctor.

### 5.1.2 Protecting His Reputation

Unlike at many public asylums, and unlike the practice to which he had been used at York — a charitable institution, at High Beech there was no board of governors to support Allen's evidence. According to the general practice of the time, and because of the supposed need for one strong directing influence, superintendents of private asylums preferred sole charge over their institutions. However, Allen's practice was unusual in that, as far as is known, he had no assistant, medical or lay, and no steward to manage his finances even when numbers of patients greatly increased, as was the case in many comparable institutions. It is also quite probable that the asylum's finances were in the control of a nominee of George Cooke. However, perhaps because he recognised from the beginning the dangers of a secretive organisation, which could be damaged by scandal, Allen set out to establish two counterbalancing practices.

Firstly his home was open day and night and at all seasons to visitors, official and unofficial — friends of patients and guests of the family. Many came unannounced and testified to a lack of panic by both staff and family at their sudden arrival.<sup>7</sup> There seemed to be a constant stream of guests — some of whom stayed for extended periods. Elizabeth Allen had to bear the brunt of these disruptions. Her family background seemed to fit her for organising the household to entertain on a large scale and she obviously had an understanding of her husband's aims and responsibilities. She made these aims her own, thoroughly involving herself in the work, taking it all in her stride, despite her seven pregnancies and the care of her three stepchildren. To prevent her total exhaustion great care was taken to employ large numbers of patient attendants and domestic staff.

Secondly Allen built up social contacts with a whole range of public figures, including his upper-



class neighbours. It has been said of any one who tried to establish themselves in the private mad-doctoring trade in the 1820s that, 'They required the possession of considerable capital with which to launch the enterprise, and a wide range of social contacts, essential to obtain access to a suitably affluent clientele.'<sup>8</sup> Allen had both these requirements. The social standing of madhouse keepers was always suspect and there existed grave doubts concerning their *gentlemanliness*. Allen took seriously his task to prove otherwise, making consistent forays into the best society. At the time of the Dutton case, a week before the second hearing at the Quarter Sessions on 23 January 1832, Allen's lawyer told him that he would need more supporting evidence. He turned to his wide variety of friends and associates for references. In a very short space of time he collected twenty-nine sworn affidavits to his character and standard of asylum practice. Not only did they stand him in good stead in court but they have also left a rich source of information about Matthew and Elizabeth Allen for posterity.

### 5.1.3 Early Lay Attitudes To Insanity

During the Dutton hearing *cruelty and neglect* were alleged to have taken place at Dr Allen's private asylum. Here was further fuel for the suspicions of the upper-middle classes who in the early 1830s were still wary of sending their mad relatives to houses run by individuals purely for financial profit. There was deep scepticism regarding the motives of private mad-doctors. Legislation was passed in 1828 requiring certification of the patient's madness by two independent doctors who were unconnected to the house to which the patient was being sent. Many believed, and in some cases quite correctly, that private madhouses were used to incarcerate their difficult, but nonetheless, sane relatives. Further it was thought that those who indulged in the trade in lunatics, once having obtained a lucrative income through confinement of a wealthy individual, would be loathe to release the same, even when cured. Allen had the task of allaying all these suspicions.

Besides this, madness in the family had always been a private affair, not talked of outside the home. The mad had been cared for by family, or attendants who could be fed and housed for a small monthly sum by the average household. The poor rather than the well-to-do resorted to seeking treatment in hospital for physical illness. The latter, in cases of illness, were visited by the physician of their choice in their own homes. With the change in attitude towards treatment of the mad to mildness and toleration, and an emphasis on the need to manage their condition, by the 1820s treatment outside the home was being advised. Family relatives were seen as the least able to apply moral restraints.<sup>9</sup> The early decades of the nineteenth-century saw a slow and steady rise in the number of private institutions for the insane

established outside of London. By 1807 there were twenty-eight such licensed houses under the inspection of the Royal College of Physicians and by 1815, two thousand five hundred and eighty-five people were known to be confined within the walls of private asylums across the country.<sup>10</sup>

#### **5.1.4 Asylums As Homes From Home**

At the time of the Dutton case attitudes were beginning to change in favour of asylum care and it was necessary for men in Allen's position to advertise what they had on offer in the best light possible and to present their care and accommodation as veritable homes from home. For the wealthy it was essential, above all else, that their relatives be cared for in a genteel atmosphere and in a manner and life-style to which they were accustomed, without fear of contamination by coarseness from the uncultured lower classes. Classification, by social class, was the first requirement of any potential client of a private asylum (See chart 3).<sup>11</sup> Allen's reputation was at stake. Were he to get a bad name he would lose clientele to rival institutions, which offered care to just such a class of patient that he was beginning to attract to High Beech. Mrs Dutton had come to him from a day's journey away, from Northfleet in Kent, which had included a ferry crossing of the Thames. This was on the far edge of the catchment area for patients treated at Ticehurst Asylum, run by the Newington family in Sussex for the upper-middle classes since 1792. Allen always aspired to be the top of the range. Later he saw himself in competition with Denham Park Asylum in Uxbridge,<sup>12</sup> a former residence of the Count de Survilliers (Joseph Bonaparte) which, 'Offered to patients [...] the social attractions of a large family circle. The class received being such only as are of superior education.'<sup>13</sup>

#### **5.1.5 Architecture And Its Therapeutic Uses**

Increasingly asylum buildings became one of the tools which alienists used to implement moral treatment. The 'home' of the insane needed to be seen, especially by the patients' families, as a healthy place, tending always to encourage compliant behaviour and an optimistic outlook. Privacy, or space to socialise, was provided according to the varied needs. Occupation or amusement was at hand in pleasant surroundings. Allen remarked on this subject, 'I have [...] been led to notice the importance of employment and amusement as a remedial measure of great efficacy [...] among a better class of patient. [...] This employment must never on any account be made a disagreeable task but a matter of pleasurable choice, if we mean it to have a beneficial influence.'<sup>14</sup> This contrasts with the methods of mass labour at that very time being introduced at county asylums such as Hanwell — not as a delicate moral influence but as a

productive method for reducing costs.

Buildings were to be organised to give the appearance of plenty of air, light and beauty.<sup>15</sup> Every sense of imprisonment or confinement was to be excluded. Asylums aimed to be the place where patients remained by choice and where their relatives were content to leave them. These principles were first practised at The York Retreat. Designers and architects took these concepts of 'Moral Architecture' to heart and they became the standard expected by the Commissioners in Lunacy.

### 5.1.6 Allen A Forcrunner To W. A. F. Browne

W. A. F. Browne wrote his classic description of *What Asylums Were and What They Ought to Be* eight years after Allen rebuilt and designed his. Browne pictured the idyllic home for those suffering from deranged minds, perfectly balanced to give the right amount of care alongside the right amount of reforming discipline:

Let me conclude by describing the aspect of an asylum, as it ought to be. Conceive a spacious building resembling the palace of a peer, airy, and elevated, and elegant, surrounded by extensive [...] gardens. The interior is fitted up with galleries [...] workshops [...] music rooms. The sun and air are allowed to enter at every window [...] all is clean, quiet and attractive [...] the house and all around appears to be a hive of industry...etc.<sup>16</sup>

Scull when reviewing Browne's ideal comments as follows:

The Asylum was to be a home [...] (where the patient was) treated as an individual, where his mind was to be constantly stimulated and encouraged to return to its natural state. Mental patients required dedicated and unremitting care, which could not be administered on a mass basis [...] [but] must be flexible and adapted to the needs and progress of each case. Such a regime demanded kindness and an unusual degree of forbearance on behalf of the staff [...] It was not considered impossible.<sup>17</sup>

However, before Browne published his ideal there were a few who had already caught the vision for themselves. Browne could have been describing, if contemporary accounts were to be believed, what life was already like at High Beech Asylum in 1837 and had been for some time previously.<sup>18</sup>

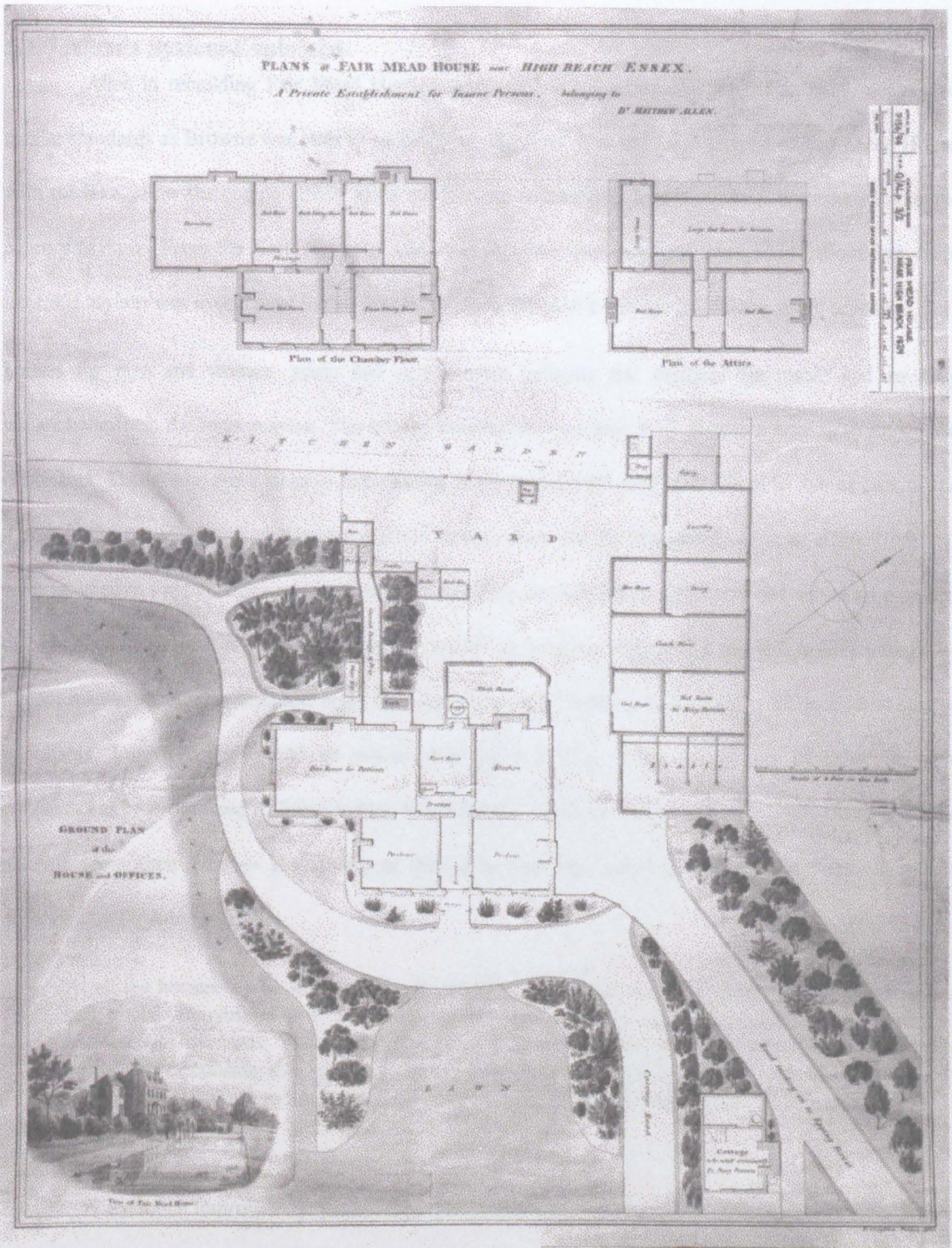
No sooner had Browne embodied the idea in print than practice began to turn the dream into a nightmare. Slowly throughout the century, as numbers of the insane steadily increased, the practise of alienism grew from the treatment of the insane into the confinement of the socially deviant, the ideal asylum changed from a home to a community and from a community into a self-supporting village with its own bakery, dairy, slaughterhouse, shoemaker, blacksmith / implement maker for the home farm etc. As well as employment and cheap labour for the asylum there was all that was needed for isolation from the outside world, all that was effective in removing the degenerate element of humanity from society and less

and less involvement in treating individual needs, phobias or monomanias.<sup>19</sup> When John Clare was admitted to the charitable institution The Northampton General Lunatic Asylum in December 1841 numbers were small enough for the superintendent, Dr Thomas Prichard, to give him valuable personal attention. This was followed by interest being taken in the poet by the steward of the asylum W. S. Knight. When Knight left in 1850, numbers had so increased that personal attention to any patient had become impossible. This was possibly a factor in Clare's continuing insanity.<sup>20</sup>

These changes in asylum provision and the steady growth in patient numbers, which gradually prevented the possibility of individual care being given to patients, was due in part to the establishment of county asylums, which catered for vast numbers of patients. Their provision was made possible by legislation in 1808 and made obligatory from 1845. Thomas Bakewell who established a small private asylum in 1806 at Tittensor near Stone in Staffordshire was a tireless campaigner against county asylums. The Staffordshire county asylum was built in 1818 and resulted in a drop in patient numbers at Springvale, Bakewell's private asylum. He wrote articles and lobbied parliament against this county system. He proposed instead a law to make the State the guardian of every lunatic and that all asylums should remain small so that cures were possible instead of mere containment. Asylums, he said, had to be small enough for the superintendent to personally oversee all treatment. In his own establishment he kept numbers low. In 1824 he had 27 patients, in 1826 they reached a peak of 53 which by 1831 had reduced to 31. Bakewell died in 1835.

Allen would have been in agreement with Bakewell concerning the necessity of maintaining small numbers of patients — Allen's highest number of patients was 52 in 1838. Their asylums had some things in common but Allen was twenty years younger than Bakewell and more flexible in his treatment of lunatics. Bakewell, who had had no formal medical training, firmly believed that insanity developed from malfunction of the bowels which caused disease of the brain. He had learnt much from his grandfather and father who had been madhouse keepers before him. Bakewell criticised the York Retreat for producing too few cures; whereas Allen attempted to follow in the footsteps of the Tukes. Allen and Bakewell both relied on their personal energy and charisma which, with their small number of patients, was effective and resulted in claims of a high cure rate. Samuel Bakewell, Thomas's son, claimed in 1833 that 231 out of 240 'recent cases' (as distinct from chronic) had been cured at Springvale asylum.<sup>21</sup>





**Figure 8.**

**Fair Mead House**

### 5.1.7 Allen's System Explained

Allen in rebuilding Fair Mead House and Leopards Hill Lodge, as he did in 1829, aspired to similar standards as Browne was later to recommend. His floor plan and small etching of Fair Mead House with the lake, show the comparatively small but familiar architectural facade, as seen on other nineteenth-century asylums. From the start, however, and after the other two buildings were added about five years later, his asylum was exceptional in that it was run on the lines of a cottage institution, using separate houses for men and women, acute and convalescent patients, and dividing the manic and severely melancholic from the monomaniac. The houses themselves were also built in such a way as to divide the occupants. Those who were clean in their habits, co-operative with staff and willing to live as part of the *family* in the house, occupied the ground floor rooms, while the uncooperative, acute or difficult patients were isolated in the first floor galleries. Allen constantly used this variety of houses and rooms as a system of rewards and punishments to encourage his patients to progress through his regime. A dirty patient, or violent maniac would, for instance, begin in an upper room in Leopards Hill Lodge in the individual care of attendants. Improved, he would be moved downstairs to live in the community of other patients; convalescent he progressed to living in Fair Mead House, where the Doctor and his family lived. How the patients spent their time — the quality of their lives and the careful attention given them — is best described by Dr Allen himself:

At all the houses we have had parties in the front part, who would in their conduct and pursuits, and social enjoyments, put to shame many families who are reckoned perfectly sane [...] amusements of cards, chess, billiards, cricket etc. For some months we published a weekly newspaper of considerable interest [...] (We have) formed within ourselves a little world of interest better suited I believe to the state of the inhabitants than the real world could be to them.<sup>22</sup>

When much improved the patient then had the privilege of dining with the Doctor and his family. Here he socialised with the many and frequent visitors at High Beech as a preparation for once more making his way in the outside world. Should there be a relapse in the patient's behaviour, or the strain of conforming become too much, privileges were removed or the patient sent back to the other house. The doctor described the process: 'It is a species of discipline like that of a nursery — children commit some fault, are removed from the object of their affection [...] some break out into passion [...] it won't do, they are removed. They soon promise to behave better and return [...] this mild medicine, instantly administered, has a wonderful influence.'<sup>23</sup> An example of this practice and how it was 'instantly administered' was described by a visitor to High Beech about 1840:

Presently an old naval officer — an admiral — came bowing to Mrs Allan [sic] and, presenting her with a note, withdrew. Mrs Allan read the note and told us who the bearer was [...] he was apt occasionally to speak rudely and coarsely; in this way he had transgressed the day before at the dinner table. "Which is the reason," said Mrs Allan, "He did not dine with us today." Mrs Allan found that by banishing him from her table she checked him most effectually. The note now brought contained an apology; and when presently he again put himself in our way, Mrs Allan spoke kindly to him, and thanking him for his note, said she hoped to see him at dinner the next day.<sup>24</sup>

## **5.1.8 Methods And Treatment Particular To Allen**

### **5.1.8.1 The Mad Seeing Madness in Others**

Allen also used the houses in another way. He felt patients could sometimes be 'Cured by witnessing their own case caricatured in another'.<sup>25</sup> He viewed lunacy as a condition of imbalance — where one aspect of the human personality was over-emphasised at the expense of another. Health or 'normality' resulted when balance was restored.<sup>26</sup> He kept some patients with incipient lunacy amongst the most obviously and outwardly insane. Some, he felt, would be shocked or annoyed by what they saw in their fellows and determine not to act in a similar manner; or they would realise that they themselves had similar idiosyncrasies which in turn appeared bizarre to the outside world. To implement this he needed wisdom and sensitivity or things could have gone badly wrong. He hoped that the caricature of themselves that they saw in their chronically insane companions would act as a warning to those who were still able to reason as to what they might become if they failed to restrain their already eccentric behaviour. He wrote: 'One principle is very important [...] Some must be classed so that bad habits may be prevented by the constant presence of others to call forth the sense of shame to restrain them.'<sup>27</sup> J. E. Esquirol expressed a similar idea that asylums are a world within a world — the world of the mad being an exaggerated version, or caricature, of the world outside the asylum, without any attempt by the mad to hide or moderate expressions and feelings which would naturally be repressed and hidden by the sane.<sup>28</sup>

Allen goes yet further — venturing into an area upon which other doctors of the time seldom ventured and upon which virtually no written comments were made. He deals with the mentally retarded patients who were nominated 'idiots' and considered, without further investigation, to be incurable.<sup>29</sup> The new lunatic asylums became partially filled with these chronic cases. No distinguishing treatment or accommodation was given to those mentally retarded from birth or as a result of injury, as opposed to the deranged or psychologically ill. This was partly because both categories were believed to originate from somatic causes. Allen saw how his practice of 'mixing' benefited even the idiots amongst his patients. He wrote:



The melancholy have been roused by the lively, and the lively depressed by the melancholy, and thus both have been brought into a better state. Even the imbecile and the idiot are roused and improved by such associations [...] more than they had been while they were in a state of seclusion. [...] I have seen many old torpid cases [...] cured by being placed occasionally among those who were in a more lively state, and this after every other means had failed.

Here *idiots* and *old torpid cases* have to be distinguished from each other; the former are imbecilic from birth or due to irreversible injury and the latter chronically ill and *deemed* incurable. Allen is not advocating a miracle cure for the brain damaged; they are merely roused and improved whilst old torpid cases are sometimes cured. He cites a case of two idiots:

Imbeciles as they were from birth they improved after their arrival [...] The common scenes and circumstances of life had not had sufficient power to rouse the dormant and torpid state of their mental functions, while scenes and circumstances that are in themselves very painful were better calculated to arouse in their moping minds, something like feeble effort at reflection. I have seen them behold the strange antics of others with intense wonder and interest — often they will catch the contagion of laughter.

He further notes that they will: 'Walk arm in arm [...] This exercise of the affections has contributed to the improvement of their physical state [...] animal spirits no longer being pent up they are not now so liable to those sudden bursts and irregular displays of passion. [...] It is not good to be alone.'<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, where to be amongst fellow lunatics would have only a detrimental and depressing effect, such a patient was moved to the house, or part of the house where he associated with the more rational 'in order to remove them from painful associations'. This resulted in the patients at High Beech being constantly moved around, and the cottage style of care being used to its maximum benefit. Allen was able to do this from the commencement of his work as his asylum buildings, though originally built as private homes, were some of the very first, under the reformed system, to be redesigned and rebuilt specifically for asylum care.

In the case of Mrs Dutton the above procedure was used: 'It occurred to me that I might place her in the house more particularly occupied by my female patients where she might [...] as I might think advisable, have an opportunity of witnessing the effect of a disorganised intellect in her own sex [...] managed with the utmost caution and delicacy, and not for the purpose of shocking her.'<sup>31</sup> Allen was keen to point out that this was done for her benefit — as part of her treatment — but it was considered by her family, who failed to understand Allen's system, as a matter of neglect. Her treatment was carried out over two periods at High Beech. During her first stay from October to December 1830 she was cared for at Fair Mead, the Doctor's family home. Part of the undertaking when Allen agreed to take her back in April 1831

was that she was to have the same standard of care as in her previous confinement. On her return she was found to have deteriorated in health and behaviour since her first stay at Fair Mead and was moved to Leopard's Hill under the direct eye of the matron, Mrs Davies, who had had, at the Liverpool Asylum, much experience of curing *dirty habits*. Only one other person in the house was noisy so that when Mrs Dutton arrived the noisy patient was moved to Fair Mead so as not to upset the newcomer. According to Allen the house at Leopard's Hill was bigger, the rooms more spacious and warm, and the care, if anything, more attentive. The Dutton family, however, saw the move away from Fair Mead as neglect and the deliberate rejection of a difficult patient, rather than a move made as part of her treatment and for her own benefit. The consequent court case gave Allen the opportunity to publicly explain his methods. The court ruled in his favour.

#### **5.1.8.2 The Use of Parole**

Allen laid particular stress on trust. His open surroundings in the forest required patients to give their word of parole. They were tried out at first by restriction to the garden, under the eye of an attendant, and then allowed access to the fields and the forest. When they had demonstrated their trustworthiness they were given a passkey in order that they might come and go as they pleased. Allen was hardly ever disappointed by their subsequent behaviour and none ever opened the door for others to make their escape. He wrote on this matter:

It is not known as it ought to be, how powerful with the higher class of patients is the principle of honour; with many a sense of religion — and with *all*, the fear of losing the approbation and friendship of those who are kind to them, as well as from selfish motives to secure the liberty and indulgences they have enjoyed. These means [...] should be constantly and steadily kept in view for the purpose of never losing an opportunity of instantly bringing them into useful and successful operation.<sup>32</sup>

Allen's patients were given more freedom in their daily routine than ever before in the history of lunacy treatment. The records show that only three patients attempted to abscond in twelve years, and only one of them was successful.<sup>33</sup> What makes this freedom of movement more remarkable is that it was taking place at a time when others were still being kept in shackles.<sup>34</sup>

## 5.2 Advice from Fellow Alienists

In setting up his asylum in Epping Forest in 1825 Allen would have been careful to follow the most up-to-date trends and treatments of the day and to follow the advice of the most well-known

managers of the mad. What written texts would he have had to hand? What would he have read on his subject? Dr Barnet followed her article on Allen with a list of books on insanity that were in the York Medical Library during Allen's curatorship. To know what Allen knew we need to look into some of these, particularly into what, for him, were more recent publications, taking into consideration the great changes that had occurred in the treatment of the insane over the previous three decades. His interest would have been in those texts written after the Select Committee's inquiry and recommendations of 1815/16.

Though pre-dating the inquiry (1813), the most influential of all texts would have been Samuel Tuke's *Description of the Retreat*, not only because of its wide general influence but because Allen was personally acquainted with the author and would have known well the institution which he established. Though changes had been conceived little had actually been done in practice to alleviate the conditions of the mad. A few private asylums such as Brislington House and Ticehurst enjoyed reputations of being well run but many private madhouses, particularly in London, still used chains, straps and swinging chairs and followed depleting regimens, in order to weaken patients and control their mania. Conditions in most houses were bad and some were still atrocious. Allen had little to go on by positive example with the exception of The York Retreat founded by the Society of Friends in York in 1792. The Tuke family were personally known to the Allens. Samuel Tuke can be said to have been Matthew Allen's greatest influence. Whether consciously or sub-consciously Allen followed in his steps when establishing his own work amongst the insane and perpetuated the ideals for which Tuke stood. The moral treatment established at The York Retreat formed the backbone of the regime that Allen established in his own work. It was this moral treatment for which Allen stood firmly in his later career when it began to come under threat of change.

## **5.2.1 The York Retreat**

### **5.2.1.1 In the Steps of the Tukes**

Carefully following the example of William Tuke and his grandson, Samuel, Allen had chosen the most elevated spot in Epping Forest, well drained, healthy, open to the country air, with views nearby that were open as far as London, and more space for exercise and outdoor occupations than his clients could ever use. Plans of Fair Mead give the impression of it being partially surrounded by a low wall and in places not enclosed at all — recalling the description of The Retreat as, 'Defended from the road only by a neat hedge'.<sup>35</sup> The property led directly onto the forest. Allen quotes an incident illustrating the benefit of

the asylum's sylvan setting: 'In this case long walks in the most secluded parts of the forest often removed or lessened an approaching paroxysm, and always superseded the necessity of having recourse to any restrictive measures.'<sup>36</sup> Given the still very prevalent fear of lunatics by the public, and belief by some madhouse proprietors that the insane were little more than animals, the lack of evident security at High Beech Asylum was very remarkable. The neighbouring population is never known to have complained about the lack of barriers between themselves and the insane.<sup>37</sup> On the contrary, the nearest neighbours seemed to have had nothing but praise for Dr Allen and his methods, and spoke of meeting the inmates of the asylum in their daily rounds, alone or with attendants, or driving with the doctor and his wife.<sup>38</sup> The only security attested to by Allen was the constant watch maintained by attendants. He numbered these at twenty in both houses — giving the names of the seven female attendants at Leopard's Hill Lodge — at the time of Mrs Dutton's residence. The total number of patients at the time was twelve; though a year later, by August 1832, the figures in the Visitors' Book show that patient numbers had doubled to twenty-four.

Tuke advocated the isolation of patients in a dark room when they became violent. It appears Allen followed this practice as the plan of Fair Mead includes a separate cottage and a room in the stable block designated, 'To be used occasionally for noisy patients'. Dr Barnet is somewhat sceptical about the dog kennel marked on the plan in the enclosed yard at the back of the house — she felt that the animal might have been used as a deterrent for would-be escapees.<sup>39</sup> It might, however, be that Allen was again following Tuke's practice at The York Retreat where animals were kept in the enclosed courts, 'To awaken social and benevolent feelings'.<sup>40</sup> Also included in the yard at Fair Mead were ducks and pigs. We know too that cattle were kept at High Beech and were slaughtered for meat.<sup>41</sup>

Samuel Tuke goes into detail about the high windows installed in the bedrooms at The York Retreat for safety and economic reasons. In Ticehurst there were bars on the windows (Tuke had gone to lengths to disguise these in York) and John Perceval,<sup>42</sup> a patient at Ticehurst in 1830, at approximately the same time Mrs Dutton was at High Beech, describes how the bars on the windows and the locks on the outside of the doors only, continually angered him. Perceval's description of his rooms at Ticehurst makes an interesting comparison with Mrs Dutton's accommodation.<sup>43</sup> He paid six guineas per week for a bedroom and sitting room. George Kocher the head attendant at High Beech for four years said that Allen charged from five to seven guineas per week for similar rooms.<sup>44</sup> We read that terms for Mrs Dutton were: 'Less than the usual charge'. She also had the exclusive use of two parlours. Allen declared that, 'Some of the rooms are furnished expensively.'<sup>45</sup> He described Mrs Dutton's rooms: 'The accommodations were at

Leopard's Hill Lodge, if possible even better, decidedly more suitable for a person in her state. The rooms at Fair Mead were too confined [...] she had an increase rather than a diminution of attendance [...] We made greater sacrifices than we would have done had she not been moved.' <sup>46</sup> The relatives of the patient viewed the room and complained of lack of curtains and bedhangings — these, Allen assured them, were only removed for washing and mending after being soiled by the patient (the dirtiest, he said, he ever knew), and were part of the usual accoutrements of the room. By contrast Perceval's furniture was comfortable but shabby, 'The beds were without hangings or curtains of any description.' <sup>47</sup>

Allen's matron had partly cured Mrs Dutton of her bad habits when for personal reasons she had had to leave her post. This departure had caused no harm to the patient as Mrs Allen herself had taken personal charge of her, often preparing her special dishes and feeding her herself. <sup>48</sup>

#### 5.2.1.2 Medical Treatment

What, concerning the treatment of insanity, did Allen learn from his one time acquaintance, Samuel Tuke? The latter placed little faith in medical care. There was from the start a resident physician at The York Retreat who cared for the sicknesses of the patients but, by his own admission, achieved little through medical means or use of medicines in treating the insanity itself. He was led to the conclusion that:

Medicine as yet possesses very inadequate means to relieve the most grievous of human diseases. Bleedings, blisters, searings, and many other prescriptions [...] received an ample trial but they appeared to the physician too inefficacious to deserve the appellation of remedies. [...] There is however one remedy [...] frequently employed at the Retreat [...] with the happiest effects i.e. the warm bath [...] of greater importance and efficacy in most cases of melancholia. <sup>49</sup>

Allen took this advice to heart and found it true in his own experience, for the bath, shown on the floor plan of Fair Mead House, has a prominent central position. Tuke also maintained that, 'It must not be supposed that the office of physician is considered [...] of little importance [...] for there is an inexplicable sympathy of body and mind.' <sup>50</sup> Allen, like the vast majority of his fellow medics, believed that doctors alone had the right training to treat the insane: 'It is absurd to suppose we can expect this (a cure) by moral or medical means singly — they must always co-operate, and never be separated in the mind of him whose object is cure.' <sup>51</sup>

Tuke argued against large institutions. Allen was in agreement and much of his success, as will be shown, was due to his and his wife's ability to maintain a close personal relationship with all their patients. However, they came under the same pressures as large public institutions, as numbers of the insane increased. For the first five to seven years the numbers were small. After the publicity of the Dutton case in



1832 and the building of Springfield, the female residence, in 1835, numbers rose sharply from twelve in 1831 to fifty nine in 1838. A visitor in 1840 stated that Doctor Allen had three houses apart from his own residence. His burgeoning family, as shown in the 1841 census, had moved out of the main house to Fair Mead Cottage in Fair Mead Bottom.

According to Mr Dutton, Allen had prescribed tablets for his wife to take. Unfortunately we do not know what they were, nor do we have any record, even from his own book, of the pharmaceuticals which he regularly used. Part of the evidence given against Allen at the Dutton trial was that Mrs Dutton's walking in the garden in slippers was due to neglect, but Dr Allen, while confirming the stoutness of the said slippers, explains that having had leeches applied to her feet she was unable to tolerate shoes. Bleeding by venesection or leeches was used, by most medical men of the time, for excitable, overactive and talkative patients — never for depressives. Allen described his treatment of a furious maniac: 'Small repeated bleedings with leeches [...] treated three times in a fortnight with purgatives, alteratives (tonics) and salines.'<sup>52</sup>

Tuke warned against treating cases of insanity with too little discrimination, quoting the routine bleeding of patients at Bethlehem. We know, as already stated, that Allen was aware of this and practised individual treatment while he was still in York. In his textbook he writes: 'It never answers to apply indiscriminately the same medical or moral treatment in any two cases.'<sup>53</sup> With the fees Allen charged it can be expected that he fed his patients well. No doubt he noted that at the York Retreat all patients received four meals a day and some required 'intermediate refreshment' and that there was no practice of a depleted regime for maniacs. Allen himself never advocated half starving his patients, which was still the practice of some of his colleagues in the 1820s, and he states that Mrs Dutton received butchers' meat and pudding every day.<sup>54</sup>

### **5.2.1.3 Moral Treatment**

Dr Badeley noted Allen's, 'Remarkably lenient and assuasive manner' to his patients, tempered by a firm opposition to their extravagances.<sup>55</sup> Allen was totally convinced by Tuke's advocacy of Moral Treatment. At High Beech he limited the use of all restraints and encouraged his patients to restrain themselves: 'They exert themselves with the hope of regaining the liberal privileges they have forfeited [...] they put forth into operation what is of the greatest importance, the valuable principle of self-control [...] We establish a wonderful moral influence over them.'<sup>56</sup>

Moral treatment was two-pronged and its effectiveness was dependent on the success of both the doctor's and the patient's efforts. The doctor set up a therapeutic environment and did his best to appeal to the patient's reason, which, contrary to the beliefs of the old regime, Tuke and Allen and their contemporaries believed the majority of their patients still maintained, at least in part.<sup>57</sup> Allen also stressed the need to appeal to the patients love of esteem and aversion to correction or criticism. This was, in direct opposition to the methods of the old regime, motivation by kindness rather than coercion by fear. Lunatics were not totally devoid of understanding or emotion, therefore a sense of moral responsibility, and a desire to please those who treated them with compassion, could be fostered in them, and called upon by their doctors when restraint was required. In time the patient developed the ability and desire to restrain himself. Compunction in the patient could be turned to genuine co-operation. In Allen's opinion Moral Treatment had as much to do with self-development as self-control. In looking for a cure, control alone was not enough. Positive change for the better was the only true evidence of healing. Contrary to modern psychotherapeutic practice the doctor never discussed the patient's delusions with him but encouraged the patient to suppress them.<sup>58</sup> Tuke advised: 'Every means is taken to seduce the mind from its favourite but unhappy musings.'<sup>59</sup> In learning to suppress his delusions the patient was helping to prepare himself for his return to society, to rid himself of anti-social habits and train himself in acceptable actions and conversation. It was the doctor's role, as Allen stated above — his 'Wonderful moral influence,' — to exert a subtle but firm authority which encouraged his patient to leave behind his old ways and look to the future. Thus the original cause of the insanity was buried rather than expunged (though we know Allen took a different view about uncovering causes) and the 'Valuable principle of self-control' (See n56 above) was brought into play by the patient himself to actively build, on the burial ground of the old mental disorder, new and better habits.

This raises the objection by some that moral restraint was a dangerous product of the mad doctor's success at 'brainwashing'; he held the power to get the patient to discipline himself. Thus by manipulation sanity was imposed and reason drove out unreason. The French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) argued that Moral Treatment was in fact moral imprisonment and was an assault on the human personality. His aim was to go back to a time before the late Middle Ages when, according to his theory, a split between reason and unreason took place in the Western world. Unreason he thought should be restored to what he considered as its correct and acceptable place in human experience. He believed that to free a maniac from his physical chains and replace them with moral control was 'Evidence of the

remorseless application of the principle of internal control'.<sup>60</sup> Foucault was a very outspoken critic of both Samuel Tuke and Philippe Pinel and in *Madness and Civilization* he wrote his own revision of the history surrounding these two men.<sup>61</sup> He specifically attacks the use of reason against unreason when confronting the insane:

The Asylum [...] placed mirrors in such a way that the madman, when all was said and done, inevitably surprised himself, despite himself, as a madman. Freed from the chains which made it a purely observed object, madness lost paradoxically, the essence of its liberty which was solitary exultation; it became responsible from what it knew of its truth; it imprisoned itself in an infinitely self-referring observation; it was finally chained to the humiliation of being its own object. Awareness was now linked to the shame of being identical to the other, of being compromised in him, and of already despising oneself before being able to recognise or to know oneself.<sup>62</sup>

Foucault seems well able to get into the mind of the patient and understand how he feels when assaulted by reason. He sees the situation of unreason through the madman's own eyes. But does the madman have the right to stay in his unreason? Certainly John Clare felt he had that right. (See p.180). Clare found 'freedom' in holding onto his delusions which gave him in Foucault's expression, 'solitary exaltation' and delivered him from the shame of identifying with, and being aware of, his real self. Clare, who wrote about the freedom of the mind, ultimately valued this freedom to dwell in a fantasy world of his own, above the freedom offered by both asylums he was held in, to be allowed to go back home if he would deny his delusions.<sup>63</sup> Clare made this choice as a means of controlling his own pain and presumably because he thought it would harm no one else. In Clare's case, Foucault seems right, there was no need to confine Clare in an asylum for the harmless delusion that he had two wives. However, Clare did not consider the effects on his wife and children who, though he could not see it then, became his victims.

But what if a madman's delusions led to violence? He may have a right to his delusions of unreason, but society has the reasonable right to protect a madman's victims from the results of his unreason by locking him up. Unreason sees no consequences for others because it is obsessed with its own need for escape from reason. Reason sees others' needs as well as its own. Foucault's own unreason made him view moral treatment as a control or chain, as Clare did.<sup>64</sup> The mind does have to be changed if its delusions result in harmful actions to oneself or others or the inability to care for oneself. Foucault's ideas might appear to be a defence of conscience and of the liberty to hold any opinion, but are, in fact, a licence to do what one likes to oneself or to society. Foucault accepted this as an unavoidable fact of life: 'Power, or our capacity to act on others, is not an intrinsic evil, but an ineluctable social fact.'<sup>65</sup> This is true, moral judgment only comes into play once we have made our choice for good or evil, but, again consequences

are ignored. The question is not *whether* we act but *how* we act. Ineluctability implies fatalism or no moral choice in what we do with our power over others. Unreason takes no account of, nor makes provision for, consequences. To do this requires responsibility in the individual and responsibility is a product not of unreason but of reason. Our right to refuse what we are, to deny reality, may be undeniable, but if society is to work, the freedom of the individual cannot be the sole consideration. What he *does* with that freedom must be considered too. Reason calls for a compromise which unreason cannot accept.

Reason and unreason Foucault believed were to co-exist. Our task as he saw it was: 'To invent modes of living which avert the risk of domination, the one-sided rigidification of power-relations.'<sup>66</sup> Foucault did not accept Moral Treatment of the insane because he did not see it as a mode of living that averted domination and he was right. Reason naturally dominates and excruciatingly reflects reality like a mirror, just as Foucault himself complains. He is asking, as only unreason can, for an impossibility. Unreason demands escape from reason because co-existence is too painful. Foucault did not see insanity as a problem that needed treating and would therefore never agree with any method of treatment, regardless of its efficacy, which resulted in sanity's return. He was against cure of any kind and was, in fact, wanting the domination of insanity and the only way to do this was to ban reason altogether before it drove out unreason. When the light shines the darkness must flee.

The originators of Moral Treatment were Quakers. They understood that light banished darkness: 'The Tukes were encouraging the Inner Light, the knowledge of good and evil, of right and wrong behaviour.'<sup>67</sup> They saw reasoned moral treatment as a means to modify the damaging behaviour associated with unreason.

## **5.2.2 Other Written Influences**

### **5.2.2.1 British**

Allen in his own textbook quoted from *Observations on Madness and Melancholy* by John Haslam. For example Haslam wrote: 'That of all the causes of mental derangement termed moral causes perhaps the greatest number may be traced to the error of early education.'<sup>68</sup> Allen was himself particularly interested in the subject of early education (See chapter 7) and took the title of the essay which he wrote on the subject from Haslam's quotation. John Haslam's book was published in 1809 and was recommended in Tuke's *Description of the Retreat* (1813). However, the book would have lost much of its authority, and the author likewise, after his exposure in the 1815 scandal at Bethlem, where he was a

Surgeon.<sup>69</sup>

Allen also quotes from Bryan Crowther's publication — he was Apothecary at Bethlem in 1811, — and also from Sir Andrew Halliday, author of *A General View of the Present State of Lunatics* (1828) on the dangers of solitary confinement of individual patients in the care of single keepers which he describes as 'prison for life.' Allen seems, however, to have been most influenced by Dr W. S. Hallaran superintendent of the Cork Asylum c.1819,<sup>70</sup> here described by a member of the next generation of the Tuke family: 'The Cork asylum was in good hands [...] the institution was as well conducted as in those days it could be. [...] Mr Rice stated before the committee of the House of Commons in 1817, that it was the best managed he had ever seen or heard, realising, he added, all the advantages of the York Retreat.'<sup>71</sup>

In *Practical Observations on the Causes and Cure of Insanity*, Cork, 1819, Hallaran divided insanity into two manifestations, one mental in the form of melancholia and the other corporeal, in the form of mania, both of which, though of the same origin, needed separate treatments — medical for the bodily symptoms and moral treatment for the mental distress. Hallaran also stressed the need to discover the cause of the illness: 'A due observation of the causes connected with the origin of the malady is the first step towards establishing a basis upon which a hope of recovery may be founded.'<sup>72</sup> As we already know from his work at York, Allen agreed with Hallaran in this. Amongst the mental causes which the latter names are dread of punishment, loss of friends, shame, sudden terror, loss of property, excess of joy etc. The corporeal causes, often followed closely by mania, included continued intemperance, sedentary modes of living and phthisis pulmonalis or haemoptysis. Allen later wrote: 'We should be fully acquainted with the history of man and be able to perceive the causes and effects of false and perverted views of philosophy, morals and religion, and above all that we should possess a knowledge of the constitution of the human mind with all the specific differences of every individual case.'<sup>73</sup> Hallaran, like Tuke and Allen, saw great advantages in the use of warm and cold baths: 'The warm bath is altogether unsafe in the first stage of mania [...] in the third or convalescent stage the advantages of a warm bath cannot be too highly estimated. In melancholia the timely recourse to it is of the first importance.'<sup>74</sup>

However, Hallaran, for all his insistence on the specific treatment of mental symptoms, can only suggest seclusion of light, exercise and diet control as specifics. Of the fantasies of the insane he says: 'The less notice taken of them the less disposed are they to retain them.'<sup>75</sup> Whereas for corporeal insanity he gives details of a long list of physical treatments such as bleeding, emetics, purgatives, digitalis, opium, camphor, blisters, warm baths and the use of the circulating swing. Of the latter he remarks that the

advantages to be derived cannot be over estimated.<sup>76</sup>

Another current publication when Allen first began at High Beech was *Essays on Insanity, Hypochondriasis and other Nervous Affections* (1816) by John Reid MD London, who was a Member of the Royal College of Physicians and Physician to the Finsbury Dispensary. Reid wrote at length on the various causes of insanity including: Want of Sleep, Excess of Abstinence, The Atmosphere of London and the Hereditary Nature of Madness. In a chapter on Lunatic Asylums he expressed an enlightened attitude, suggesting that tenderness is better than torture and kindness more effectual than constraint and remarks that blows and straight waistcoats are too hastily employed. His hesitancy fully to support asylums, however, comes from their previous bad reputation and he doubts their effectiveness, despite their growing popularity, except as a final resort:

That a wretched being, who has been for sometime confined in a receptacle for lunatics, is actually insane, can no more prove that he was so when he first entered it than a person's being affected with fever in the Black Hole of Calcutta, is an evidence of his having previously laboured under febrile infection. Many of the depots for the captivity of intellectual invalids may be regarded only as nurseries for the manufactories of madness, magazines or reservoirs of lunacy [...] Many have been condemned to a state of insulation from all rational and sympathising intercourse before necessity has occurred for so severe a lot.<sup>77</sup>

This vision of the damage which confinement in an asylum could do to a person would have been a warning to Allen concerning the pitfalls to avoid when establishing his institution. He would simply have been proving Reid right had the majority of his patients deteriorated into chronic states of insanity or developed hallucinations and eccentric habits which they had not had on entry into his asylum. Against this negative opinion Allen would have weighed the positive advantages which he subsequently emphasised in running his own asylum.<sup>78</sup>

Finally there was Thomas Mayo's *Remarks on Insanity*, published in London in 1817. Mayo, the son of a society physician, became the visiting physician at Ticehurst Asylum from 1818 to 1835.<sup>79</sup> He took up medicine after an Oxford University classical education at a time when a Doctorate in Medicine from Oxford had the lowest reputation in medical qualifications. Unusually, he started his career by publishing a textbook in support of his father's methods of treating insanity which he adhered to in his own practice for many years. Allen, in seeking inspiration for his own project, would have found no support for the reformed methods of treatment had he perused this 1817 publication. Mayo believed insanity to be purely of somatic origins and initially had no time for moral treatment scorning the emphasis put on comfortable, attractive asylums which provided amusements and occupations. He also had reservations,

due to his particular perception of the Christian faith, as to any doctrine of mind which interfered with free will or implied materialism. Though sympathetic, Allen would not have shared Mayo's religious fears and objections. He saw his task as all to do with influencing the patient's will — 'His (the superintendent's) task is to secretly direct the mind without appearing to do so'.<sup>80</sup> With his background of Sandemanianism, a hyper-Calvinistic sect, Allen might well have viewed man's freewill as decidedly limited. As for materialism of mind, we know that Allen completely denied this, and did not see it as an implicit part of belief in phrenology.

Mayo saw insanity as caused by vascular congestion of the brain. This Allen would have agreed with to a certain extent<sup>81</sup> — but he would not have agreed with Mayo's recommendation of a depletive regimen, or his extensive use of restraint by strait waistcoat. Experience brought Mayo to a change of heart so that by 1829 he was publishing such articles as that entitled 'Insanity and its Moral Preventive', in the *London Review*.<sup>82</sup> Over time he had accepted the need for a measure of moral treatment.

In reviewing the information he might have gained through perusal of current English works on the treatment of insanity in 1824, Allen would have found the practice of humoural medicine reinforced, much written in favour of mild treatment and gentle management, warm baths, good diet and the benefits of keeping his patients well occupied. There would, however, have been little to be learned of revolutionary new techniques or wonder cures. He could only take what was good and add to it his own new ideas about classification, his system of rewards and punishments, his careful therapeutic 'mixing' of his patients, his use of parole, and use his asylum, its buildings and its surroundings, to their full advantage.

To this he and his wife added immense compassion, personal commitment, energy, time, and devotion of their home and property to the work of caring for the insane. Allen was a skilled observer, his books are filled with case notes and what he learnt from them. He was always ready to try something new or alter his treatments. In this sense he was a pioneer in his field and contributed to the positive advance of treating the insane.

### **5.2.2.2 European**

Amongst the varied quotes with which Allen fills his writings there are many from European sources. He quotes from French alienists Pinel, Esquirol, Voisin and Fabret [? Falret]. He admits to favouring the French theories of moral causes of insanity, in preference to those of English alienists, whom he was quick to criticise. (See p.68).

Allen wrote two accounts of Italian Asylums<sup>83</sup> — one, long and harrowing, from Dr Jackson's account of the Casa de Pazzi in Turin, Piedmont, then under Sardinian rule, where the conditions were, he said, as bad as at the Hôtel de Dieu in Paris before it was reformed;<sup>84</sup> the other is of the enlightened superintendent of the Aversa Asylum in Naples, who wrote on the character of good asylum keepers (as described in chapter III above).<sup>85</sup> In his *Essays on Chemical Philosophy* Allen also quotes directly from Lavoisier, Fourcroy and Chaptal.<sup>86</sup>

The only indication that Allen ever travelled abroad himself is found in his brother's *Memoirs* which say that he, 'visited London and Paris' just prior to his leaving the York Asylum. Matthew never referred to this in his own writings. There are two broad reasons why he might have travelled to Paris at this time. The first, as Oswald presumes, was simply to have a good time and squander his money. Another reason could have been, better to inform himself about the care of lunatics. Paris was the place where moral management and treatment for the insane was first successfully practised. Asylums in Paris, famed for their humane policies, The Bicêtre, for male lunatics and the Salpêtrière for females, over the years, drew many foreign visitors who were eager to learn about treatments practised by the French alienists.

While there is no evidence to support Oswald's explanation of his brother's trip to Paris there are some facts which give credibility to the alternative reason for the visit. It is possible that Samuel Tuke and Matthew Allen met in York and discussed the trip which Tuke intended to make to Paris in August 1824. The Tuke family had always socialised with the Allens and Samuel Tuke would have known Matthew from the time he became apprenticed to Oswald.<sup>87</sup> Matthew might have persuaded Tuke to allow him to accompany him to Paris — Matthew's powers of persuasion are well documented by his brother — and Tuke perhaps agreed, on the condition that no one at the York Asylum knew with whom Allen had gone. Tuke would not have wanted to be blamed for encouraging their superintendent to be absent without leave. Matthew when he gave his word would have kept it and never referred again to having been in Paris, or with whom. We know that Samuel Tuke was in London in August 1824. He returned his children to school there and on the next day, the ninth, he went to Paris. In a letter he wrote: 'We went first to the Salpêtrière [...]'. He does not say who accompanied him and the rest of his description is in the first person singular. That the two men should have gone to Paris independently but at the same time — Matthew's supposed trip had also been in August — would have been an extreme co-incidence. It seems highly likely that Matthew Allen had arranged to meet Tuke in London — Oswald specifically mentioned that Matthew had gone first to the capital — and that he was with Tuke in France. In the same letter referred to above,



Tuke described his visit:

We went first to the Salpêtrière [...] Dr Esquirol was out of town; but his assistant, Dr Mitivié showed me their private establishment for 30 patients, who pay 400 to 500 francs a month: and accompanied me through every part of the Salpêtrière. [...] (It is remarkable for its cleanliness, the absence of unnecessary restraint and the general appearance of [...] satisfaction. [...] On the whole I am disposed to think that there are very few establishments in England for the cure of the insane which afford so good an asylum or so great a probability of recovery.

The Bicêtre to which I gained a very ready admission, and very kind attentions from the physician Dr Pariset is a very different state, and with the exception of the ward for convalescents, is disgraceful to the French government. Nor is the Hôpital de Charenton at all better. There are in these three places upward of 2,000 lunatics, of whom, happily, the greater number are in the Salpêtrière. At Charenton the patients pay from 800 to 1300 francs per annum [...] whilst at the two other establishments nothing is paid. [...] They might certainly take some useful lessons from *us* but I think there is a good deal to be learnt from *them*. [...] Notwithstanding the zeal with which the science of medicine is pursued by the French, and the excellence of their schools, they are said not to rank so high as practical physicians. The mortality in the French hospitals is much greater than in the English for the same complaints, and it is much greater in the city at large than in London.<sup>88</sup>

There is further evidence that Matthew Allen and Samuel Tuke had had dealings with each other at that very time. When Matthew left York for Hull in October 1824 Oswald wrote to him mentioning that he had given Samuel Tuke the money that Matthew had left for him.<sup>89</sup> If Allen did accompany the famous Yorkshire philanthropist it must have been an unforgettable and highly instructive visit for him. That they went *together* to Paris does, however, remain speculative.

### 5.3 Professional Relationships and the Policy of Non-Restraint

In 1841, when the poet John Clare was in High Beech Asylum (See chapter VI), and when he had reached a state of convalescence and was ready to return home, Allen made several attempts to raise money for a trust fund for Clare's support. During the course of these efforts he suggested to Cyrus Redding that he publish some of Clare's new poems in his *English Journal*. There was a short passage of letters between Allen and Redding but only some fragments of this correspondence remain. In these Allen makes some significant claims about his practice at High Beech and his relationships with other alienists who were involved in what was later to become known as the Non-restraint Controversy.

#### 5.3.1 Allen's Two Letters

There are two letters written by Matthew Allen to Cyrus Redding in 1841. The first in April says:

The treatment which I have pursued for more than twenty years of which I could have proved to you that I was the first who carried out a system of kindness and liberality about which others who have been to imitate it, have made so much puff and fuss in puffing themselves off, while I in my quiet and retired way have been altogether overlooked by the press.

Ellis (Hanwell) was an old friend of mine and always called himself my Pupil as regarded his plans and treatment of the insane and Mr Charles Augustus Tulk has been my intimate friend for these last sixteen years, knowing most minutely everything about me and my plans.

And the second, a month later, speaks of: 'Denham Park [...] trying to injure me among my friends. [...] I send this letter as it will let you more into my history in being the Author of this New System of Non-restraint without the puff than my writing directly to you for the purpose, of course the letter itself cannot be noticed.'<sup>90</sup>

### **5.3.1.1 The Context of the Correspondence**

From other material of the period the context of the discussion between Allen and Redding can be established. It concerned recent events at the new Middlesex County Asylum in Hanwell where, three years previously, Sir William Charles Ellis had resigned as superintendent. The new superintendent, John Conolly introduced a policy of total non-restraint and a debate about the merits and demerits of restraining insane patients was currently being conducted by Thomas Wakley the editor of the popular medical journal, the *Lancet*. Rival asylums to High Beech, particularly Denham Park, near Uxbridge, had used the debate as an opportunity to bring themselves to the public's attention. Redding must have asked Allen why he had not done likewise, in the light of his long experience, and shared his views on insanity with his fellow alienists and the public. Allen had probably followed the actions at Hanwell and the press coverage closely; Ellis and Charles Augustus Tulk, who had been the chairman of the board of governors at Hanwell were, he claimed, both close friends of his. Although they might both have been close friends of Allen, they were opposed to each other in the circumstances which arose at Hanwell.

### **5.3.1.2 Allen's relationship with William Charles Ellis (1780-1839)**

The two men had much in common but only fragmentary evidence remains that they knew each other at all and whether Ellis did relate to Allen as his 'Pupil' can only be guessed at. Allen, as has been demonstrated, was an early reformer in the history of lunacy, being one of the first to take steps beyond mere management strategy, as described in the earlier part of this chapter. Ellis, the older man by three years, was an even earlier reformer but inclined to hold more rigidly to the old ways and be less radical in the changes he made. In this sense he did follow in Allen's footsteps.

Both had come to medicine the hard way by a long apprenticeship to an apothecary/surgeon. Ellis had served his apprenticeship in Hull where he had afterwards worked at The Hull Refuge, a private

asylum. Like Allen he was a 'humble academic' gaining his MD from St Andrews University in 1815 by submitting certificates as to character, education and professional competence signed by two physicians.<sup>91</sup> While in Hull, Ellis had experienced a profound religious conversion to the Christian faith. He became a Methodist lay preacher and afterwards continued this ministry in Wakefield. He would have been in sympathy with Allen's continuing Christian faith and concern for the spiritual lives of his patients. Like Allen he preached regularly to the insane.

In 1818 Ellis was appointed superintendent of the West Riding Asylum in Wakefield. Samuel Tuke had written a plan for the construction and running of this new asylum and Ellis would have been fully conversant with his ideas. Allen of course knew Tuke well from his years spent in York. Both men's practice was deeply indebted to Samuel Tuke. To Ellis was given the credit by Tuke of being the first to put spades into the hands of his patients: 'He first proved that there was less danger of injury from putting the spade and hoe into the hands of a large proportion of insane patients than from shutting them up together in idleness, though under the guards of straps, straight waistcoats or chains.'<sup>92</sup>

'Spade Culture' was introduced at The West Riding Asylum well before Allen's similar experiences at High Beech (See under 'Miscellaneous Patients' p.164). Ellis had provided work for his patients from the asylum's inception in 1818 when he 'Established a thriving weaving industry'<sup>93</sup>

According to Ashworth's account of Ellis' work at the West Riding Asylum, much was done to manage the patients in an enlightened fashion; to improve the diet, supply occupation, reduce (but not abolish) restraints. Ellis was convinced that insanity was a disease and, as such, was treatable and sometimes curable. Like Allen he pleaded for early treatment when a cure was easier to achieve. Ashworth says little, however, about moral treatment or measures to modify the behaviour of individuals with rewards and punishments or by encouraging self-control. However, in the book Ellis himself wrote he does discuss moral treatment as passages from his introduction show: 'The moral treatment is by far the most difficult part of the subject. In this the most essential ingredient is constant, never-tiring, watchful kindness [...] An account is given of the measures actually adopted for the punctual and orderly arrangement of the duties necessary to the management of a large family.'<sup>94</sup> This is the area in which Ellis could have learnt from Allen. Admittedly there was always the difference in the size of the asylums in which they worked. Ellis, always dealing with large and swelling numbers, attempted to provide a family atmosphere both in Wakefield and Hanwell and took a parental attitude over the whole of both the institutions.<sup>95</sup> Given the size of his asylum, however, he was unable to exert the same amount of personal influence that Allen did

through regular contact and conversation with individuals. Ellis's concerns were chiefly expressed in his care for externals, occupation for the patients and the comfort of their surroundings, while Allen had the time and the space to pay more attention to psychological issues.

Both men had been influenced by W. S. Hallaran and like him used the swinging chair with recalcitrant patients. However, Allen moved on from this practice early in his time at the York Asylum. Ellis could have learnt a lot more about mild practises from Allen than he did, as further comment about him shows: 'Obstinate and incorrigible patients who did not respond to Ellis's plan were dealt with by the humane and rational plan of punishment by deprivation and confinement [...] if these did not suffice the "terror of the electrifying machine" was found to "often overcome the vicious inclination."' <sup>96</sup> Allen, as far as is known, never stooped to such treatment or even contemplated it.

Allen first met Ellis while lecturing in Wakefield in 1825. Phrenology was probably the strongest link between the two men. Ellis wrote a letter in 1835 in which he said: 'For years I have found it (phrenology) extremely useful in the treatment of insanity.' <sup>97</sup> Phrenology had forced both men to take an individual interest in their patients and their personalities. In 1833 and 1836 Ellis referred patients from Middlesex to Allen's asylum, indicating that they had a continuing professional relationship. Neither refers to the other in the books they wrote on insanity. These scraps of information only hint at the kind of relationship they had.

### **5.3.1.3 Events at Hanwell 1831-1837**

The public asylum in Hanwell, Middlesex, was built to accommodate the rising number of insane patients in the county and was at the time the biggest ever built, soon providing for six hundred pauper lunatics. Andrew Scull notes that when it drew: 'Great contemporary attention as the inspiration for non-restraint', its role, 'in the whole process of lunacy reform' became 'paradoxical'. <sup>98</sup>

William Ellis and his wife went to Hanwell as superintendent and matron in 1831. The then fully accepted attitude among alienists was that the superintendent was lord over his own kingdom, that is to say, that he alone was accountable for all that took place in the asylum. Under these circumstances he maintained the 'powerful moral influence' that Allen referred to as absolutely necessary to anyone who wanted to obtain positive results through the practice of moral treatment. <sup>99</sup> Though Hanwell had above six hundred patients, Ellis, in his desire to effect moral treatment, created and maintained a family attitude and paternal influence over the whole establishment, while at the same time ruling with an iron hand, as the

only means to maintaining order. He was in fact trying to do the impossible — attempting to continue moral treatment with the number of patients far beyond the amount over which he could have personal influence.<sup>100</sup>

Ellis took this stand with the initial approval of the board of governors. They, under pressure themselves from the central government, exerted pressure on Ellis to keep expenditure as low as possible. Ellis succeeded admirably and within a few years became renowned for his low cost, well-managed asylum. This was possible due to the system of intensive patient-labour introduced by Ellis along the lines he had practised at the West Riding Asylum. He and Clitherow, the then chairman of the governors, established the Queen Adelaide fund. With royal sponsorship it assisted newly released patients to support themselves. Ellis was knighted for his work at Hanwell.

Despite this success there were rumblings of discontent amongst the governors about who should control the day to day running of asylums in general, which, when the size of Hanwell, involved large sums of public money. Should it be the local authority, a medical board, or central government itself? Henry Knight, a Whig M.P. launched an attack on Ellis raising questions about the statistics produced by the latter. With Clitherow's support for Ellis, the matter was dropped though there were still those who resented Ellis's dictatorial administration. A new set of governors, now led by Charles Tulk, a former Whig M.P. and friend of Allen, determined to press ahead with reforms. Their insistence that the superintendent's responsibilities and authority be divided show that Tulk's 'Appreciation of Allen's plans and what they stood for' was not as positive and comprehensive as Allen had suggested to Redding. The new governors approached their task as businessmen; gone were any thoughts of the personal treatment advised by Samuel Tuke and his imitators. They brought in changes, which reduced Ellis to a position of an administrator who shared responsibilities amongst other medical men and financial managers. This in practise meant the end of any attempt at individual moral treatment. The carefully fostered family atmosphere was abandoned for management alone. It was for Ellis a denial of all he believed about treatment of the insane and the practice of asylumdom which he had spent most of his life developing. Rather than abandon his convictions he resigned from his post.

For the last two years of his life Ellis founded and administered a small private asylum at Southall Park. He was able to put into practice the form of moral treatment he believed in, amongst a small number of wealthy patients, without interference from anyone.

At Hanwell, with the new set of governors now in control, a new superintendent was appointed. He was John Millingen MD whose experience had been as an army doctor. Military discipline no doubt was an attractive prospect to those who wanted public institutions run on ordered and accountable lines. Millingen lasted for a year and then had to resign on the discovery of great irregularities in the conduct of the asylum. John Conolly MD was appointed to the post in 1839.

#### 5.3.1.4 Dr John Conolly

Conolly had never, until 1839, been an asylum superintendent. He had been a Visiting Physician for the Lunacy Commissioners in the county of Warwickshire and in 1830 had written *An Inquiry Concerning The Indications of Insanity* in which he wrote against the use of asylums for treating the insane.<sup>101</sup> In 1847 he retracted his opposition to asylums in his book *On the Construction of Lunatic Asylums*. At Hanwell in 1839 he commenced a new policy in caring for the insane — total non-restraint. All restraint of patients was abandoned and every instrument of restraint in the building was sought out and removed. He announced his success with this method in his first annual report, which was greeted with widespread scepticism by other alienists, *The Times* and the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy.<sup>102</sup> Investigation proved his claims correct and he was hailed as the originator of the system, though he denied this accolade in favour of Dr Charlesworth, physician at the Lincoln Asylum. Dr Conolly had visited Lincoln in 1839, and praised the system already in place there. Both he, Charlesworth and their supporters refused to acknowledge the work done by Robert Gardiner Hill, the House Surgeon at Lincoln, who claimed that it was he who had introduced the system of non-restraint in 1835, when he took up his post at the Lincoln Asylum. He later described its beginnings:

Previous to my effort no Superintendent, Physician or Governor, ever before, as far as we have records of Asylums, ventured to live, move and sleep in an institution charged with insane persons, every inmate being always equally as free as himself from all mechanical impediment. Now I voluntarily [...] of that experiment accepted all the risk [...] with my eyes wide open upon it that if any accident had followed the experiment, if any patient set free had committed suicide, [...] had committed homicide, not Dr Charlesworth, [...] nor any Governor, would have borne the responsibility, it would have been borne exclusively by the house surgeon, and that house surgeon was myself.<sup>103</sup>

Hill, 'An unpolished, ill-educated and provincial rival'<sup>104</sup> with an embittered and unpleasant personality remained unnoticed while Conolly was recognised as, 'One whose name shall pass down to posterity with those of the Howards, the Clarksons, the Father Matthews and other great redressers of wrongs, crimes and miseries of mankind'.<sup>105</sup> In time Conolly gained his knighthood. Though he only

remained at Hanwell for four years his reputation grew apace, till in 1859 Lord Ashley, in a Committee of the House of Commons, referred to his achievements as, 'The greatest triumph of skill and humanity the world has ever known'.<sup>106</sup> This grossly exaggerated claim, seems even more so when it is accepted that Conolly's was not pioneering work but only a bold implementation of what had already been proven at Lincoln and elsewhere. The myth that built up around Conolly's actions at Hanwell and developed in the latter half of the nineteenth-century, that what he did was a great and positive step forward in the treatment of the insane still persists today.<sup>107</sup> It can be compared to the greatly exaggerated reports of Philippe Pinel and his heroic freeing of lunatics at the Paris asylums in 1793, when what he had really done had been solely in response to the instruction of the National Assembly.

The support by Allen, and other asylum superintendents, from both the public and private sectors, for the maintenance of mild restraining measures was largely ignored by asylum governors, local authorities and government bodies at the time. The real issue of the debate for most alienists of the reformed system seems to have been whether total non-restraint was as important as humane personal attention, including discipline through gentle restraint and self-discipline by the patient. The conclusions reached at the time, that applauded Conolly's way forward, have recently been reassessed, for example, in 1989 by Andrew Scull, who has shown Conolly's work to have been of exaggerated importance and supported by men who had political motives.<sup>108</sup> When Conolly instigated the new regime of non-restraint the governors of Hanwell approved it as evidence of humane treatment, but were also following a political agenda of their own. It was largely the administrators who backed Conolly's actions.<sup>109</sup> Non-restraint could only be implemented in an asylum the size of Hanwell under the strictest of vigilance — a vigilance which appeared to the governors as the top priority. When restraints had been in place, vigilance had been slack. Akihito Suzuki, who has also recently reassessed Conolly's work, quotes Conolly: 'Restraint was the grand substitute for inspection, superintendence, cleanliness and every kind attention. It was not until restraints had been for some time abolished that I ever found the inspection plates properly attended to.'<sup>110</sup> Suzuki then explains: 'Note the underlying logic here: one needs non-restraint in order to achieve tight discipline among the work force, not the other way around. Rigorous work-discipline was by no means an undesirable price to pay for the abolition of chains on the patients; but non-restraint was the key to the imposition of work-discipline on the workforce.'<sup>111</sup>

No consideration at all was given to the merits of patients learning self-control through wisely implemented disciplinary measures.<sup>112</sup> Suzuki makes a highly significant comparison between the regime,

which Ellis governed, and that of Conolly. Conolly, 'Found himself embarrassingly incompetent providing moral treatment, the subtle face to face psychological manoeuvring of patients by acting on the latent rationality in their minds.'<sup>113</sup> In sharp contrast to Ellis: 'Who was loyal to the ideal of personal and individualistic mental care. [...] Conolly's contact with the minds of individual patients was minimal. While violent patients had provided a prime opportunity for Sir William and Lady Ellis's charismatic and parental moral control, Conolly thought it best to leave them in seclusion.'<sup>114</sup> Conolly considered long conversations with the patients 'generally useless and now and then mischievous.'<sup>115</sup> He was embarrassed by the demands of providing just that 'wonderful moral influence', about which Allen had spoken and professed to have taught to Ellis. Suzuki also finds Conolly's new regime to have damaged the advancement of psychiatry by being the first move away from the advances made between 1820 and 1845, altering the focus from moral treatment of individuals to stagnatory managing of large numbers of insane, kept away from the public eye in huge asylums. His final word on Conolly was that he 'Dug not only his own grave but also that of moral treatment in its original version'.<sup>116</sup>

Fifteen years later the effect of this new approach had reached the birthplace of moral treatment. The historian of the York Retreat wrote of that renowned institution: 'In 1855 [...] other references reinforced this impression that patients increasingly were regarded rather less like children (to be treated indulgently) and rather more like untrained animals (to be domesticated), as in the eighteenth-century view of the lunatic'.<sup>117</sup>

I would suggest the main thrust of the missing letters of Cyrus Redding and his correspondence, for which we have only the briefest of replies from Allen, is revealed above. What was important about Allen's relationship with Ellis was their mutually agreed experience of individual moral influence on their patients. Allen advanced the practice and Ellis followed in his footsteps calling himself Allen's 'pupil'. Once Conolly's approach took hold, Ellis and Allen became part of the 'old school', who governed by effective moral control rather than by the vigilance and order required with a non-restraint policy. From 1845, when each county was required to build its own asylum, the preferred policy was that set in motion by Conolly, which could function so efficiently in large asylums with a minimum of patient/doctor personal contact. Perhaps this is one reason why Allen spurned entering into the arguments over non-restraint, which seemed to him of less importance than the continuing practice of moral treatment itself. Allen was keeping to the initial vision of Samuel Tuke — a vision that Ellis also held — while others were subtly deviating from it.



### 5.3.1.5 A Personal Grudge

While the above holds true, the possibility of Allen holding a personal grudge against John Conolly has to be considered. Allen and Conolly had a lot in common. They had both struggled to achieve their own niches within the medical profession. They were both hopeless with regard to money and often in debt and struggling to make ends meet. Their gregarious personalities made them pleasant company and both were anxious to maintain their status as gentlemen in good society. Probably both suffered from a sense of inferiority and were anxious to hide their past failures.<sup>118</sup>

Allen's textbook on the treatment of lunacy, *Essay on the Classification of the Insane*, was published in 1837 and in 1839 a scathing criticism was published in the *British and Foreign Medical Review* by its editors, John Forbes MD and John Conolly MD — not exactly hot off the press.<sup>119</sup> It was two years since Allen's book had first come out and just a matter of months before Conolly's actions at Hanwell brought him to the attention of the world. The publishing of the criticism of his book was probably the first time Allen became aware of the *British and Foreign Medical Review's* existence and of the name of Conolly.

Allen's previous publications had received just enough good reviews to keep him happy. His essays *On Chemical Philosophy* had been published in 1819 in *The Philosophical Magazine*, a journal especially intended for the publication of new discoveries and inventions. It was owned by Alexander Tilloch, a Sandemanian. *The London Medical Repository* gave Allen's seven essays a glowing review with virtually no criticism. His book of sermons including his section on early education had gone into a second edition and reprint. In 1831 *Cases of Insanity* received reviews in *The London Medical Journal*, *Monthly Magazine*, *Union Monthly Magazine*, *Periodical Review* and *The Gazette*. Here now was his definitive work sneered at by the editors of a new publication. He had never before been faced with, what must have seemed to him like annihilation, by his peers.

The copy of the book which Forbes and Conolly possessed had serious production errors in it. Claiming to be bound together with *Allen Versus Dutton*, it was not, and caused confusion in the reviewers' minds from the start. The plan of the work, lacked clear headings and, along with the 'rambling style', its aim, to them, was 'unintelligible'. On its contents they were damning: 'Every successive page convinces us the more of our incapacity to fathom the scope and tendency of Dr Allen's meaning.' However, the greatest let down for the author must have been the dismissive: 'The essay consists of cases and observations, neither of which present any kind of novelty [...] and the practical observations,

generally are unexceptionable.' [sic]. The only consolation was their opinion that the pictures of 'old regime' patients within the book furnished 'very respectable phrenological testimony'.

The poor production of the book was hardly Allen's fault but rather, a shame on John Taylor. Forbes and Conolly's criticism of the style, that it made the book exceedingly difficult to read, was, however, correct. Allen enjoyed writing but he had no talent for self-expression. He was fussy and verbose and couldn't keep his ideas objective or in perspective. Too much of the author's own temperament is conveyed in its 'colloquial, reminiscent manner'. His enthusiasm for his subject ran away with him. His heart ruled his head and his emotions triumphed over science. As in everything that he wrote, the criticism of his medical theory is well justified. They particularly picked on the sentence 'An alteration in the state of the nervous energy, *generating an acrid and morfibic matter in the system, and ultimately disease*', which, given the ignorance of medical matters in the 1830s, still seems to be bad physiology. Allen's medical education never seemed to do any of his patients much good.

It must have been very galling to Allen as their comments were made at the same time as they congratulated such esteemed alienists as Prichard and Esquirol, on their recent publications. He was made to look a fool. It is interesting that alongside their criticism of Allen they also did a fair job of cutting up the recently published life's work of William Ellis considering his system 'not now a new one'.<sup>120</sup> Is this again a case of the new generation dismissing the 'old school'? The dismissive attitude of the reviewers is, however, their own undoing. In their hurry to put down the unknown alienist from High Beech they fail to take the time to understand his work and miss some cases which *were* exceptional in that they were cured. They entirely fail to comment on his moral treatment and its successes. The thoroughness of their reviews seemed dependent on their perception of the importance of the authors. Humility in judging their peers seemed entirely absent given the viciousness of their criticism. Before Allen could have got over the smart of that cutting review Conolly's name was on everybody's lips, especially those in his own profession. It is not strange that he bore resentment and did not wish to be drawn on the subject of non-restraint.

It has recently been written of Allen and Conolly: 'It is hardly conceivable that the two men did not know each other.'<sup>121</sup> That they knew about each other is true, but it is easy to believe that Allen desired never to set eyes on John Conolly.

### **5.3.2 Matthew Allen's Claims**

Allen was obviously envious of his fellow alienists who were now taking the glory for a system

which he felt he had, in essence, been following for years. He was less than truthful with Redding in claiming to be the author of the 'new system' and at the same time discouraging Redding from making this claim public. When Redding published twenty of Clare's new poems he also published a description of Allen and his work at High Beech in his periodical the *English Journal* in April and May of 1841:

In the Asylum of Dr Allen [...] no restraint is exercised. The patients are attached by kindness and a course of treatment calculated to soothe and please, in place of engendering irritation and disgust. This system is carried out further by Dr Allen we believe, than any other medical gentleman who has made the management of the insane a profession.<sup>122</sup>

That Allen practised no restraint at all was not true. By comparison, however, with the standard practice of only twenty years before — shackles, chains, never removed month upon month, and patients on beds of straw, — what Allen did, confining a patient now and again with a strap to a chair or isolating him in a dark room for a few hours seemed to him to be no restraint at all. Conolly's actions at Hanwell seemed to him, hardly significant. Allen's close acquaintance with the real results of general indiscriminatory restraint at The York Asylum, resulting in cruel deformities and vacant minds, would have brought loud denials from him about the so-called harm done by strapping someone to a comfortable chair till the paroxysm had passed.

Could Matthew Allen then have said in truth that he had grounds to claim he had pre-empted the work of Conolly and even Gardiner Hill? Allen's work was certainly earlier, but was it as thorough in its termination of all methods of restraint? In the meagre evidence available this does not seem likely.

Matthew Allen understood and practised moral treatment to its fullest extent and was in favour of medical and medicinal treatment as well, fully believing that the care of the insane was best left in the hands of the medical profession. Reading his textbook and hearing the testimony of his patients and others it could seem that, long before most of his professional colleagues, led by Mr Robert Gardiner Hill and Dr John Conolly, Allen had arrived at a policy of non-restraint. One could feel that perhaps the honours went to the wrong men when one reads what he wrote in 1837:

Even in the height of the most furious paroxysms it is astonishing how much may be done by liberality and kindness. Nothing but absolute necessity should justify absolute restraint [...] A small dark closet I have found more useful than the straight waistcoat which I have not resorted to in seven years and then never for more than an hour or so [...] It was better to run the risk of rather overmuch liberty than [...] exasperating them by what is generally deemed [...] necessary restraints and confinements [...] I have [...] known the violent maniacal excitement very much lessened in force and bettered in direction, by being allowed with an attendant, to ramble and dance and scream about, in the secluded parts of the forest, for a whole day together, and which superseded the necessity of the straight waistcoat.<sup>123</sup>

However, the records of the official visitors when carefully studied leave one in no doubt that Allen did employ methods of restraint on very difficult patients. The occasions were few and far between and the restraint mild — probably the most forcible was strapping a patient into a chair (See the case of Mr Selby: p.227). Certainly no chains or shackles were ever used — but that Allen did use restraint is clearly documented. The law insisted on quarterly visits to all asylums by officials responsible to the court of Quarter Sessions. These men, who spoke to all the patients, kept a signed record, every time they visited, of the numbers of patients, male and female, new arrivals, deaths, special incidents and complaints and whether there was any restraint used and if it was severe or physically harmful. The following extracts are all the incidents of restraint noted in the Visitors' Book for High Beech Asylum 1832 to 1844 — twelve incidents in twelve years:

13 August 1832 — No complaints — none under restraint.

11 October 1834 — None seem under restraint except such as is essential towards them and which is only in one or two cases.

31 December 1836 — One patient under restraint, but slight and appeared requisite.

29 December 1838 — Only one under restraint. Mr Clark after recent violence.

6 April 1839 — Mr Best under restraint which appeared essential for his own safety.

12 October 1839 — None under restraint beyond what appears absolutely necessary and one only is so restrained.

28 December 1839 — Miss Somers under restraint — appears necessary from her violence.

13 October 1842 — One patient under restraint — appears necessary and essential.

31 December 1842 — Arabella Somers partially under confinement.

30 March 1843 — None under more restraint than the necessity of their several cases — satisfied with their general appearance and treatment.

24 June 1843 — None of the patients except Miss Somers, to whom it appears essential, are under restraint.

14 October 1843 — None restrained beyond what is necessary for their own personal safety.

29 June 1844 — There do not appear any under restraint that can be with safety to themselves and others allowed liberty.<sup>124</sup>

These instances are minimal. It is significant that the trend was towards more restraint as the numbers increased and as Dr Allen's personal difficulties increased. If Allen could not rival the claims of Hill and Conolly he had an immense amount to add to the debate which followed in support of Non-Restraint and its importance or otherwise. Yet he strangely scorned the idea of entering into debate when he said to Redding: 'Others [...] have made so much puff and fuss [...] while I in my quiet and retired way have been altogether overlooked by the Press.'<sup>125</sup> It is unfortunate that Allen did not speak out. He failed to recognise the significance of the correspondence in the *Lancet*,<sup>126</sup> presumably because at that time he

was otherwise heavily preoccupied. Had Allen contributed to the debate he would have brought his work into the public eye and his methods over the previous fifteen years into the limelight as never before and perhaps received some deserved acclaim and encouragement. He instead dismissed Redding's promptings with resentful remarks about his fellow alienists.

### 5.3.3 The Debate In The Lancet

During the early and latter months of 1840 and the first quarter of 1841, the *Lancet* opened its correspondence columns to contributions from both supporters and opponents of the new system being proposed for the treatment and management of manic patients. *The Times* too, with which Allen had previously corresponded, made its contribution, and was initially against methods of non-restraint. On 10 December 1840 it described the reports from Hanwell Asylum as: 'A piece of contemptible quackery and a mere bait for the public ear.' And on 5 January 1841 it quoted Dr Samuel Hadwin a former House Surgeon at Lincoln Asylum: 'Restraint forms the very basis and principle on which the sound treatment of lunatics is founded [...] it appears to me as likely to be dispensed with in the cure of mental diseases, as the various articles of materia medica will altogether be dispensed with in the cure of the bodily.'<sup>127</sup>

The editor of the *Lancet*, Thomas Wakley, encouraged the debate after Conolly's Hanwell Report was published.<sup>128</sup> He wished to contribute in some way to a matter he considered of great importance but the correspondence was slow to get going and Wakley, publishing the Annual Report of the Glasgow Royal Asylum early in 1840, remarks on its lack of comment about the restraint of patients and hopes for a change in the following year.<sup>129</sup> Dr Corsellis, who followed Ellis as superintendent of the West Riding Asylum,<sup>130</sup> wrote two excellent articles against Conolly's new practice, maintaining (as the majority of correspondents did) that total non-restraint was impossible. He himself practised mild treatment, was against cruelty of any kind, but believed that there was value in a regime where restraint was used as a last-resort punishment for bad behaviour and as an encouragement to self-restraint.<sup>131</sup> His letter immediately provoked a reply from Robert Gardiner Hill and a short debate developed between the two. Hill continued defending non-restraint, and himself as the initiator of the method, continuously for more than a year in the *Lancet*. He had a supporter in *Looker-on* who was also a regular contributor and whose identity was never revealed. Indeed the use of pseudonyms was unfortunate for posterity, as the reader now has no idea where the arguments were coming from. *Peep-in*, *Philanthropos*, *Philalethes*, and the like, were among the regular contributors, the latter being in favour of restraint, but only in moderation.<sup>132</sup> Dr Andrew Blake superintendent of Nottingham General Lunatic Asylum thought abolition of restraint was a utopian

proposal and that judicious restraint was often a powerful engine of moral treatment.<sup>133</sup> *Philalethes* praised the Stilwell brothers who ran the Moorcroft House Private Asylum, with a mild, efficient discipline and whose recovery rate was said to be sixty percent. There was a letter from Arthur Stilwell himself<sup>134</sup> who believed mild restraints such as ankle straps were instruments of positive moral coercion. He pointed out that alternatives for restraining instruments, such as confining patients in completely dark rooms (rather than darkened rooms for the calming of mania), and the use of shower baths, and the altering of diet, could be just as easily abused as gentle physical restraint. These were all techniques of which Allen had vast experience and could have debated to the general profit of the *Lancet* readers. As it was, when non-restraint became the order of the day, the combined experience and wisdom of all the above correspondents was set aside. With the result that the efficient practice of mass alienation triumphed well into the next century.

#### 5.3.4 Rival Institutions

Arthur Stilwell used the opportunity to explain and promote his work at the Moorcroft House Private Asylum, an institution very similar in size and practice to Allen's. In the midst of this continuous correspondence the editor of the *Lancet* received a letter from a layman calling himself *Moraliter* requesting advice on where to place a close relative suffering from insanity. The unequivocal opinion of the editor, Thomas Wakley, was printed on January 1841:

We have no hesitation in stating that we give the preference to the institution at Denham Park in Buckinghamshire over every other with which we are acquainted [...] the treatment is based upon the purest and most correct principles of science and philanthropy [...] the cure is made the first and great object of the physician [...] By avoiding annoyance and by inventing a vast variety of sources of pleasure Denham Park has been almost rendered a domestic paradise to the sane and an earthly heaven to the insane. It is nearly impossible to bestow on this establishment more praise than it deserves.<sup>135</sup>

*Moraliter's* reply came so speedily on the 23 January that it hardly seems possible that he could have made his own assessment by then.

If all were like Denham Park [...] the bane of speedy cure would less often be resorted to: the disease would be taken in its incipient stages, premonitory symptoms would be more fearlessly noted and attended to and medical men would have fair play and not tamely submit to see medical science and moral influence tramped upon by brute force.<sup>136</sup>

It was to these two letters concerning the asylum at Denham Park, as well as the debate in general that Cyrus Redding referred to in his correspondence with Matthew Allen in May 1841. Allen brushed them

aside with a comment about 'Denham Park trying to injure me among my friends'.<sup>137</sup> Certainly the *Lancet* gives the impression that the *Moraliter* correspondence was 'invented' as an attempt to promote Denham Park Asylum. But the suggestion by Allen that it was a personal attack on himself verges on the paranoid. He could not complain at a rival asylum attempting to promote itself if he was not prepared to make the same effort, even if not in such an 'underhand' way.

In retrospect it was clearly a huge mistake for Allen to ignore the 'advances' taking place in his own profession and to fail to make an impact himself, through the debate. He had always sought publicity — here was the greatest opportunity so far through the most legitimate of means. His judgment and sense of priorities went awry and thus he lost a great opportunity. Yet, as he had by then, confessed to Tennyson, he was tired of lunatics, and he was desperate for money.<sup>138</sup> Carlyle commented about Allen when he saw him in September, 1840 that he looked 'considerably older' — it was, at most, only sixteen months, since he had last seen him.<sup>139</sup> Allen was obviously beginning to show signs of strain and his grip on his work was beginning to slip as he entered the last four years of his life.

## CHAPTER VI

### PATIENTS AT HIGH BEECH- MISCELLANEOUS AND DISTINGUISHED

#### 6.1 High Beech Asylum, Epping Forest

This chapter brings together all the scattered accounts about life in Allen's asylum. Many of these accounts have literary connections, the best known of which are some of the poems of John Clare, the Northamptonshire peasant poet who was sent to Allen's asylum in July 1837 and absconded in July 1841. While in Essex Clare wrote a number of poems, described by Allen as 'Effusions of great beauty'.<sup>1</sup> During his last year in the asylum, Clare developed the habit of adopting the persona, amongst others, of Lord Byron and wrote two verse collections in imitation of Byron, *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*. The latter, strongly satirical, paints a bitter and very negative picture of his life in Allen's asylum. These poems are the only written account which accuse Allen of misconduct towards his patients and will be discussed below.

The accounts of Thomas Campbell the poet and the sad history of his son, a patient of Allen, have never before been collated; they are here put together into a complete case history. Included in this section is part of a graphic, eye-witness description of Laverstock House, a well-known Victorian Asylum, which has long remained unnoticed in Campbell's biography. Accounts of visits to High Beech Asylum, by Mrs Carlyle, Cyrus Redding, Mrs Elizabeth Epps and numerous, lesser known, friends of Allen such as Captain Thomas Brooke, Dr John Brown and George Swire, the publisher, are of interest as they contribute to our understanding of the treatment of lunacy at this period.

#### 6.2 Patients at High Beech Asylum

##### **6.2.1 Miscellaneous Patients**

The majority of those recorded in the Visitors' Book were unremarkable individuals about whom no more is known than their name, age, address, occupation and whether they stayed at the asylum





Figure 9

Painting of Leopard's Hill Lodge



Figure 10

Painting of Fair Mead House

indefinitely or were discharged as improved, recovered, unchanged or completely cured. More is known about some, however, because of their connection with well-known families, historical events or literary figures. We also have cameos of a few unnamed patients described in Allen's books. Together all these provide a picture of the day to day life in the Asylum.

Allen describes the two cases detailed below highly subjectively and selectively.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless they highlight the persistent, personal care given to individuals and indicate the time needed to pursue this method. Allen is in no way suggesting that all such cases were successful. The Visitor' Book indicates the failures. He is, however, making two points. These were patients of whom he wrote 'she came of her own accord' (36) and 'he came of his own choice'. (45) and both needed delicate and patient handling. Despite the fact that they had both been in and out of asylum care for nearly twenty years their insanity was still, 'at the incipient stage', that is, their minds were: 'In a state of perversion rather than absolutely lost or deranged [...] cure depends on correcting this perversion [...] Something more than common attention is required to such patients'. (47)

The first was a lady patient in the early days of the asylum. She was admitted for two months in 1826 — 'before the time Mrs Allen came to us' (39) and then of her own accord returned a month later and stayed for some years. Allen had known her when she had been a patient at The York Retreat. She was a chronic case of seventeen years standing 'in alternate states of excitement and depression and in confinement all this time'. (36) Her character was weak and unpredictable, she lacked self-control and suffered from religious melancholia to the point of torture. Allen said of her 'She had more power to engage one's commiserations than any other patient I ever had [...] her appeals for sympathy were overpowering. No case shook and overwhelmed my nervous system as this did'. (38-39) It was to his great relief that after his marriage he was able to hand over her care to his wife about whom he said:

(Elizabeth Allen's) lively and cheerful disposition, [...] and judicious kindness combined with great gentleness and firmness soothed and softened her melancholy state and in time tempered the extremes to which she had been subject and kept her spirits in a better direction [...] Perseverance in this system of unwearied [...] unequalled kindness gradually mitigated and diminished these alternate states of excitement and depression. (39-40)

The patient, who had always, before Mrs Allen's arrival at High Beech, been critical and interfering in the domestic arrangements at Fair Mead, was taken under her wing and trained up to run the

household. She became quiet and efficient in her task largely as a result of her deep desire to please one who had so deeply won her affections. At the time that Matthew Allen was writing she had been 'upward of 3 years in the world engaged in useful and active duties'. (43)

To a male patient, without any identification other than 'No.373', Allen gave an hour of individual counselling every evening, 'Detailing him the history of my own life in the style of the Arabian Knights'. (45) Knowing well the background of this patient and the 'errors and bad habits into which he had fallen' (46) he counteracted these by instilling into his mind 'beautiful views of the truth', (46) taking care that the manner and spirit in which he did this exactly met the patient's mood. He, who had been a hypochondriac for twenty years, became, in only nine months, 'altogether another being' (45).

There were other not so subjective accounts. In 1828 Mr Charles Harris, a surgeon and friend of Allen, sent him a patient whom he visited frequently at High Beech and found her treatment 'in every way satisfactory'.<sup>3</sup> She had remained for a year before being removed from the asylum, and then worsened again. She was sent back to Allen and at the time of his writing was in an advanced state of convalescence. Mr Harris had recommended several others to the care of the Allens. One case — an army officer — had recovered and stayed as a friend with the Allens from where he had visited Harris. Another patient sent by Harris had been a Banker from Lombard Street. His wife had insisted on staying with him and regarded Mrs Allen as 'the guardian angel of the place'. (34) He knew one patient who had voluntarily returned three times to avail himself of Matthew Allen's 'unexampled liberality of treatment' (34)

On another occasion the Metropolitan Police brought a man to Allen. Having found him in a ditch they concluded he was an escapee from the asylum. He was identified as Captain Robert Price of the forty-first Regiment (Welsh) and was suffering from paralysis. When the official visitors came on a routine visit they found the man, as yet unidentified, for whom Allen had submitted no papers to their clerk. Allen himself was away. The matter was satisfactorily sorted out on his return when relatives were contacted. They requested that Price remain in the asylum until he recovered, but within a short time he died.<sup>4</sup> Such unexpected but time-consuming incidents were, it seems, to be accepted as part of the mad-doctor's lot.

Mrs Dutton was not the only patient who caused Allen trouble. The Visitors' Book records several official complaints. One poor woman had been left with Allen by her husband, when she was some months pregnant. He was James Heron, a Warehouseman from Islington. She complained to the official visitors when they came on their round that she did not want to have her child in the asylum, that she had

'unjustly and unnecessarily been detained [...] near her accouchement'. No one at all had visited her during the months she had been at High Beech. All her family she said was in Scotland. Elizabeth Allen was herself Scots and this case can be cited as one where she failed completely in her efforts to soothe a woman with whom she had several affinities — her nationality, her distance from home, her pregnancy and coming motherhood of which Elizabeth herself had abundant experience, having by then had six children. Dr Badeley and the other visitors commented: 'We cannot perceive in her any aberration of mind. Her opinion ought to have been consulted [...] she ought to be removed to where she can have female attendants and also the advice of Dr Hooper of Queens Street, Cheapside.' The records show that having been at the asylum from January to April 1839 she was removed by her husband, her state being 'Improved'.<sup>5</sup>

The Visitors' Book records that on 15 January 1840 Mr Robert Selby, a wine merchant from Old Dorset Place, Clapham Road, Surrey was brought to the asylum by his brother-in-law. He was discharged in July of 1841 as 'Improved'. On 24 May 1842 a letter was received by the Metropolitan Board of Lunacy Commissioners from Mr Selby complaining of his treatment at High Beech. He stated that while he was under restraint he received visitors who wished him to sign a deed transferring his property to trustees and that Allen had released him from restraint in order to provide the signature required. Allen in reply to the Commissioners denied that Selby was restrained and stated that he was in fact perfectly calm and reasonable and thus able to make his own decisions. The situation was apparently resolved when Allen provided an affidavit for the Chancery proceedings. This, however, was not, as we shall see, and as Allen might have hoped, the end of the affair.

Under the heading of 'Examples of gentle treatment of the furious' Allen writes of the case of a male patient who came to them from another private asylum in a state of 'the most furious, destructive and malignant excitement'.<sup>6</sup> He was one whom his family considered quite incurable. While still in this furious and dangerous state he was persuaded to work with a spade on the construction of a new road, later named after him, which connected the houses of the asylum. Two attendants were set to watch him constantly with instructions not to allow the furious man to become aware of their vigilance. He was treated with such confidence and encouragement that he was brought to believe that he had the contrivance, management and superintendence of the whole project. 'Not a word or a look was done to offend him while he was as perverse and as provoking as it is possible for a daemon to be [...] to bring the better parts of his mind into life was a great difficulty. However perseverance in this system restored him'

(70).<sup>7</sup>

## 6.2.2 Distinguished Patients

Allen, was said, by one who visited High Beech, to have in his asylum several very distinguished persons.<sup>8</sup> He himself said, 'Some articles of a very superior kind in our Critical Journals have been written in this place.'<sup>9</sup> It is not at all clear to whom, and to what articles, he was referring when the 'known' inhabitants of his asylum are individually considered. It raises the suggestion that other unregistered or voluntary patients, never known, from any other source to have undergone treatment, were at one time 'guests' of the Allens. We do know of at least five high profile persons who stayed for substantial periods as patients.

### 6.2.2.1 William Montagu

One young man who entered the Asylum at the age of twenty-two, on 19 March 1829 was William Montagu of Bedford Square in London. He was brought there by his father who gives us an account of how he decided that High Beech was the right place for his son. 'Being necessary to place him under the care of a medical gentleman I obtained frequent interviews with Allen without my motive being known that I might make my own judgement. Thus I became convinced of his intelligent and humane disposition.' When placed with Allen, William was depressed and miserable. His father, after many unannounced visits to High Beech found him healthy in body, receiving 'parental and affectionate attention' and gradually, after four years, he had become 'cheerful and happy'.<sup>10</sup>

William's father, Basil Montagu, was a successful chancery barrister and, though thirteen years his senior, was one of Matthew Allen's earliest London friends. They were alike in many ways, sharing similar interests. Basil had also been married three times, having, a large unruly family which resulted in Carlyle describing the household as a 'most singular social and spiritual menagerie'.<sup>11</sup> His family background, however, differed considerably from that of Allen. Basil was the second, but illegitimate son, of the fourth Earl of Sandwich — the Earl himself had a reputation for mental instability. An ex-lover shot dead Basil's mother, Martha Ray, an actress, one night when she was leaving Drury Lane theatre. Basil was acknowledged by his father and brought up on the family estate at Hinchinbrook, Huntingdonshire. He was educated at Charterhouse, graduated with an MA from Christ's College Cambridge and, due to a reversal of financial circumstances, he studied law and was called to the bar in 1798.

Like Allen, Basil Montagu wrote several professional works, but dabbled all his life in literary

pursuits. Having a particular interest in Lord Bacon — Carlyle described Montagu as 'busy all his days upon Bacon's works'<sup>12</sup> — he gained some notoriety for a sixteen-volume edition of the *Works of Bacon* which was published in 1837. This was criticised by Macaulay in the *Edinburgh review* and Montagu replied by commencing a series of *Letters in Reply*. In 1835 Montagu became a KC and also accountant general in the Court of Bankruptcy. Bankruptcy had become his legal speciality; he wrote profusely on the subject and gave evidence before a special Chancery Commission suggesting radical reform of the laws. When Allen himself became a bankrupt he no doubt turned to his friend for advice — he could have got no better in the country — but we have no evidence for this. Montagu was a barrister and at the time Allen needed the professional help of his solicitors — Bischoff and Co. — those who had brought him success in the Dutton Case.

William Montagu was probably Basil's second or third son born to his second wife, Laura, daughter of Sir William Beaumont Rush, whom he married in Glasgow in 1801. It was, however, Basil's third wife (she bore him two sons and a daughter — having also a daughter from a previous marriage), who became well known in her own right. She was a mentor of Edward Irving when he first came to London — he named her 'The Noble Lady' — and through him the Carlyles were introduced to the Montagus, whose town house at twenty five Bedford Square was a venue for fashionable literary gatherings. Both husband and wife, often taking Irving or Carlyle with them, attended with enthusiasm that other shrine for 'literati' at the period, Coleridge's Thursday evenings at Highgate. Basil too had long been an acquaintance of Wordsworth, having met him in London in the days before the French revolution, when he and Wordsworth shared similar political enthusiasms.

Mrs Montagu, who had originally been the governess of Basil's children — which would have included William — before she married their father, receives worthy praise from Carlyle, for taking over the running of that chaotic household. He quotes Irving as saying of her 'She is like one in command of a mutinous ship, which is ready to take fire!'<sup>13</sup> Carlyle's description of Mrs Montagu, is worth quoting:

Truly a remarkable [...] and partly a high and tragical woman [...] with the remains of a certain queenly beauty, which she still took strict care of. A tall rather thin figure; face pale, intelligent and penetrating, nose fine, rather large and decisively Roman; pair of bright, not soft, but sharp and small black eyes, with a cold smile as of inquiry in them; fine brow, fine chin, both rather prominent: thin lips always gently shut, as if till the inquiry were completed, and the time came for something of a royal speech upon it. She had a slight Yorkshire accent, but spoke [...] as queen-like, gentle, soothing, measured, prettily royal, [...] towards subjects whom she wished to love her. The voice was modulated, low, not inharmonious, yet there was something of metallic in it, akin to that smile in the eyes. One durst not love this high personage as she wished to be loved!<sup>14</sup>

It is not surprising that Jane Carlyle stood very much in awe of Mrs Montagu. She met her for the first time in 1831 and this meeting plus the subsequent visit they made together to High Beech she described in a letter on the 6 October that year, just prior to her making another longer visit to High Beech:

I went with Mrs Montagu to Epping Forest — about 15 miles from town — to visit Dr Allan [*sic*] a Scotchman [*sic*] who has a lunatic establishment in the midst of the Forest — a place where any sane person might be delighted to get admission. The house, or rather houses (for there are two for patients in various stages of lunacy) are all over hung with roses and grapes and surrounded with garden ponds and shrubberies without the smallest appearance of constraint. And the poor creatures are all so happy and their doctor such a good humane man, that it does not at all produce the painful impressions that asylums of that sort usually do. I am going to pack to stay some days. Dr Allan is an old friend of Carlyle and his wife is a very excellent woman. Proctor (Barry Cornwall) we see often, and his wife who is Mrs Montagu's daughter (by her first marriage to a Yorkshire solicitor) is my most intimate acquaintance here [...] and now I must go and pack for my little journey.<sup>15</sup>

This cameo of Allen's asylum in 1831, throws a positive and spontaneous light upon life there and how the place would have first been seen by Mrs Dutton, for example, who was a patient there in that year. Jane Carlyle's opinion, as an intelligent and independent outsider backs up Allen's more subjective comments about his work.

It does not appear that Thomas or Jane Carlyle had any idea that Basil Montagu had an insane son and that the purpose of Mrs Montagu's visit was not only to see the Allen's but also to visit her stepson. Many upper-class families had relatives in asylums, but this was often considered a matter of shame or secrecy to be kept from the closest of friends.

William, whose occupation is recorded in the Visitors' Book as 'Clergyman', was only twenty-two. His insanity must have struck soon after his ordination which would have followed close on his coming down from Cambridge. This intelligent, well-bred young man was one of Allen's failures. Despite the early treatment he received he remained in the Asylum until he died eighteen or more years later. The *Dictionary of National Biography* tells us that Basil, who died in 1851, outlived all his children but two, who were children of his third wife.

#### **6.2.2.2. Thomas Telford Campbell (Thom)**

The poet Thomas Campbell, (1777-1844) for whom there is a memorial in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, is today an almost forgotten Romantic. His work is seldom found in modern anthologies. Campbell, if remembered today at all, is known for his friendship with Lord Byron; and was

one of a cluster of poets whom Byron considered his intimate friends. It was Byron who, in 1813, considered Thomas Campbell to be, according to public opinion, England's third most popular poet. He ranked him along with Walter Scott, Rogers and Moore in a class of their own followed by Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge.<sup>16</sup> Campbell sprang to fame at the age of twenty-one with a long poem entitled *The Pleasures of Hope* which caught the popular mood of the time. 'It was', according to Logie Robertson, 'The last notable utterance of the eighteenth-century school in the well-worn heroic couplet. His model was Pope and there were echoes from Goldsmith, Thomson, Cowper and others'.<sup>17</sup> Some of his most striking passages described the massacre of Polish patriots at the Bridge of Prague, when in 1795 Russia, Prussia and Austria divided Poland between them. Concern for suffering patriots became a lifelong passion for Campbell. Following the insurrection of the Poles against their Russian oppressors in 1830 many of them found refuge in Paris and in London. Campbell's organised help for these people was to have repercussions for Dr Allen and his asylum. Before that, however, Campbell's personal circumstances brought him to that same doctor's acquaintance.

In 1803 Campbell married and his son Thomas Telford Campbell was born in July 1804. A second son, Alison, born a year later, died at the age of five from scarlet fever. Campbell pinned great hopes on his only surviving child becoming a successful scholar and with this in mind 'Thom' was given the best of educations. Cyrus Redding remarked that: 'In the expanding intellect of his son, so often mentioned in his letters, Campbell thought he had discovered those moral elements that required only time and culture to render him "an ornament of society"'.<sup>18</sup> However, at the age of fourteen, while away at school, whether as the result of an accident it was never clear, Thom began to show symptoms — fits of temper and acts of violence — which required him to be removed from the school. Calmer at home, his father saw his problems as some passing physical malady, and, after some months, sent him to study under a tutor at the University of Bonn. Later he was removed to a tutor at Amiens, as his parents wished him to be nearer home. Thom, at the age of seventeen, appeared to have left his previous troubles behind him, when disaster suddenly struck once more.

Campbell was informed that his son was in gaol in Boulogne, having been found by the local police, after walking to the coast from Amiens, in a state of confusion, and without a passport. With the aid of the French ambassador in London, Thom was released and returned home to his parents. A letter from his French tutor followed, revealing the extent of his mental alienation. For some time previously Thom had exhibited signs of mild eccentricity which had suddenly worsened into paranoia. He would



sometimes take it into his head that persons on the other side of the street had insulted him, cross over, go up to those who had not even noticed him and demand why they conducted themselves so insultingly towards him, and what they intended by it.' <sup>19</sup>

For a time Campbell left his home in Sydenham and moved to London where he introduced his son to society. This was in some ways successful. Cyrus Redding, a long-standing friend of Campbell, and with whom by this time he was sharing the editorship of *The New Monthly Magazine* describes what Thom was like:

Young Campbell possessed excellent natural abilities, his disposition was good, his conversation, when he felt inclined to be communicative was superior to that of most youths of his own years [...] (237)

(He) behaved with much propriety, so that in general little or nothing of his disorder was visible to strangers. He read the newspapers, commented with some judgement upon the political events of the day, and at his father's table it would be difficult to observe traces of mental alienation. (238)  
His complaint exhibited no increase, but seemed to settle down into a mild species of aberration, visible only upon exciting causes. (239)

Some months later when Thom's German tutor visited London and Campbell discussed his son's problems with him the tutor revealed that Thom's eccentricities had originated considerably earlier than his father had thought, saying, 'His case is one of decided melancholia and he ought to be put under medical supervision and treatment'.<sup>20</sup> Campbell also felt concerned that his son's problems might be hereditary for at that time his wife's sister was temporarily mentally deranged. He consulted Dr Warburton<sup>21</sup> whose opinion, Campbell said 'Stunned me, and required deep consideration on the steps which ought to be taken'.<sup>22</sup> Much consideration was given to acquiring a keeper for Thom at home, but Campbell decided against this course of action: 'If a keeper comes [...] it will require cooler minds than either she [Thom's mother] or I possess, to draw the right line of distinction between the force which a man must fairly employ and the improper violence which we may suspect him of employing.'<sup>23</sup> This indicates the measure of violence that Thom himself manifested at times.

Campbell finally chose to place Thom in Laverstock House, the private asylum run and owned by Dr Finch and his wife, near Salisbury in Wiltshire. The full account of their visit there for the first time with Thom in October, 1822, when he was eighteen years old, is recorded by Campbell and quoted in his biography by Dr William Beattie. It is a rare and sensitive account of a layman's fears and expectations about insanity, encountered closely for the first time. Campbell and his wife were quite terrified about what they would find in an asylum and naturally worried about Thom's future care. At the same time Campbell

records the visit with objective interest and a fair degree of humour. Thom remained calm and unconcerned throughout.

On 15 October 1822, after a long coach journey they approached the asylum with a feeling of dread and stopped to address a lady in Dr Finch's garden. Veiled and dressed like a nun she was quiet and dignified, however: 'There was an air of quiescent madness in her grey eyes, and red porous features — something indefinable in her physiognomy — that came over me as if a bucket of cold water had been thrown on my shoulders.'<sup>24</sup> Presently they were joined by a pauper patient, pale limping and incoherent who pointed the way to the gate of the asylum. Moving on in fear and trembling they were suddenly startled by a dismal howling which they at first thought, with horror, came from the patients! It was in fact the howling of the pack of hounds which Dr Finch kept for his patients to hunt with.<sup>25</sup> 'The momentary belief of its being the voice of human beings made one's blood run cold.'(408)

As they walked up the avenue and approached the mansion they were accosted by a group of 'Leering' ladies and men stared at them from a window with 'a bustling and comic curiosity' (408). All these terrors were allayed by the reception they received from the Finches, full of assurances and kindness expressed in a gracious manner. 'I was glad to get into a room by myself where I could sob to my heart's content with abundant but not bitter tears.' (409) Finch's terms ranged from two to ten guineas a week according to the comforts that were required. Campbell wanted the best, but was unable to afford five hundred guineas a year and so it was decided to settle the matter later by correspondence, Finch giving the rather illogical assurance: 'There is not a comfort or luxury which the richest of my patients commands that shall not be afforded to your son.'(410) Campbell then asked about the advisability of visiting Thom. He wanted to know, 'were visits not sometimes prejudicial?' Finch replied:

Yes, very frequently. A lady, whom I now have, was on the point of recovery, when her husband *would see her*: and I reckon her to have been thrown back a year in consequence of the interview. However a duty which I owe to myself is only to *advise* the friends of the afflicted to abstain from premature interviews; for if I command them to do so, I should throw back my establishment instantly into that class of houses which are averse to being visited from suspicious motives. (405-406)

Campbell then required that the doctor inform him at moderate intervals of the treatment he was giving to his son and the progress he was making. This Finch promised to do. Thom's parents were further comforted when they saw the other patients and the fare they were given and heard them speak in the absence of the Finches of the incessant kindness of their host and hostess. Before they left Thom to the

care of the asylum, Campbell and his wife shared a meal with the Finches and two of their patients.

Much of this description of Laverstock House and its proprietors is reminiscent of the Allens at High Beech. However, it was not long before Campbell's hopes began to fade and the promises of Dr Finch appeared valueless. In December 1822 about six weeks after their initial visit Campbell wrote that Finch's method with Thom followed the mild system — 'it had the angelic quality of mercy' (414) — but there was a want of specific details in the doctor's report — 'a most ambiguous and vague account' (414). Eighteen months later things had badly deteriorated. Thom was sullen and difficult. His father wrote bitterly: 'Thomas is not more outrageous but more dogged and disagreeable. He is excessively anxious to convince us how very cordially he hates both his mother and me' (432).

From Dr Beattie's notes in preparation for his biography of Campbell it seems that Thom returned home to his parents for a while in 1824. Dr Warburton was further consulted and on his advice Thom was returned to Laverstock House. But it did not work. A year later he was home again and once more returned to the asylum and Beattie's comment was 'Thom has got much worse'.<sup>26</sup> In May 1828 when Thomas Campbell's wife died his son was at home with him and the relationship between them was obviously much improved: 'My dear boy is growing companionable and getting if possible everyday more necessary to my existence'.<sup>27</sup>

Thom was, however, by no means restored to normal. When provoked he could be difficult, erratic and irresponsible and needed surreptitious watching. As his father was often away from home father and son arrived at a mutual decision that, when a suitable place could be found, Thom would take up permanent residence there. How Campbell came to choose High Beech Asylum is not known, but in June of 1828 Thom spent a few weeks there while his father was on a visit to his aunt. Evidently this stay was a success and at the beginning of the following year, 1829 Thom is entered in the Visitors' Book as a new resident. His age at the time was twenty-four [not thirty-one as recorded]. He remained there until September 1844.

In the opinion of Cyrus Redding, an intimate of Campbell, who knew Thom well, his disorder did not increase after the first attack. However, his father abandoned hope of change for the better after the second or third year 'when his son's constitution had become completely formed'.<sup>28</sup> Allen was unable to do anything for Thom to lessen his eccentricity. Occasionally Thom would maintain a paranoid aversion to other patients — expressed in outbursts of rage — whom he thought were critical of him. He had an

allergy to wool, which increased his irritability and needed special clothing including corduroy trousers. Much of his time was spent outdoors in the forest and local towns. He was under no restraint except his word of parole given to Allen and to his father. He befriended Captain Sotheby, son of William Sotheby the poet, Allen's closest neighbour.<sup>29</sup> Allen, knowing him to have great intelligence, encouraged him in intellectual pursuits and over the years in the asylum he learnt and became fluent in the Spanish language.<sup>30</sup> Thom was content; his eccentricities disturbed others but never really seemed to disturb himself enough to make him desire to change.

In an account of a visit to Thom on the 9 May 1838, Campbell describes his continuing and unaltered mental state:<sup>31</sup>

By 10 o'clock I was at Woodford, some three miles from Dr Allen's where I met my dear Thomas waiting for me. Oh, how my heart yearned! [...] We walked through the forest. He looks well and, but for the sort of leap-frog play of thoughts in his conversation, that is an abrupt transition from one subject to another, and something besides in his look which though not alarming is not easily described, one could scarcely suspect that there is anything the matter with him. It is plain nonetheless that his mental affection is still as decided as ever; but God be thanked! He is by no means gloomily affected. (246)

On that same visit Campbell met one of his son's friends and fellow patients. He gives a description of him — George Steadman — who according to the patient list was a 'Dr of Physic' and came from The Isle of St Thomas (part of The Virgin Islands) in the West Indies — a noble looking man with refined manners and conversation. Thom found him perfectly normal and thought it absurd that he was confined to an asylum, but the poet, when left alone with him, was far from the same opinion. His own derangement, Steadman explained, was slight and caused by a refusal of a lady to marry him. Campbell thought that it was most likely the reverse and that the refusal was because of the derangement. Steadman's opinion of Thom was that his main mental misfortune was the lack of power to apply himself continuously to one subject.

Here is an instance when Allen's idea of one patient caricaturing another, failed. Thom could not see Steadman's madness or his own.<sup>32</sup> He would perhaps have benefited by regularly observing 'normal' behaviour. But there was not then, nor is there now a standard of normality. Thom thought of himself as, as good as the next man. Allen failed utterly to influence him otherwise. In Thom's case asylum life mitigated against a cure. He could always rank his own high intelligence alongside that of Clare and Steadman and feel content about himself. For him to develop a concern about his own eccentric behaviour he needed the constant contrasting company of sane people. Thom must have spoken of John Clare for his

father says, 'The rustic Poet Clare [...] has written a poem in which he mentions my son's conversation as one of the solaces of his life' (247). His father pressed Thom to say if he felt he could be better placed. Thom's reply is one of the few-recorded personal opinions of a patient about life at High Beech Asylum: 'I am attached to this place. I have many friends even among the worst patients, and the servants of the house are most attentive to me. It would be difficult to find a better place.'(246) This was not all that Thom felt about being confined as insane. He refrained from complaint to spare his father concern, and remained compliant as long as his father lived. After his father's death he made public his belief in his own sanity, as will be discussed in chapter eight.

### 6.2.2.3 John Clare

#### His Background

He was born in 1793, in the village of Helpstone in Northamptonshire, the child of Parker and Ann Clare, poor agricultural labourers. His formal education was minimal but John Clare's natural gifts were considerable, amounting in the opinion of many to genius. He became an expert on the botany of the region where he lived, had a lifelong interest in mathematics, played the violin and, while struggling to earn the money to buy books, taught himself to write poetry about love, nature and the countryside. A local bookseller in Stamford, Edward Drury, introduced Clare to his cousin, the London publisher, John Taylor. After much correspondence with Clare, and editing of his work, in 1820 Taylor published Clare's first volume of poetry *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*. It was immediately popular amongst all classes, and poetry with a countryside theme became especially fashionable for a time amongst the elite. Clare became the darling of the London literary scene. When three editions of his first volume sold out Taylor immediately prepared another volume, published in 1821 as *The Village Minstrel and other Poems*. Clare paid four visits to London and was introduced to a group including Charles Lamb, amongst others, the majority of whom contributed to Taylor's *London Magazine*. Clare made particular friends with Allen Cunningham, the poet, and Edward Rippingille, the artist, with both of whom he corresponded. The latter took Clare around London showing him well-known landmarks and the more seedy nightspots. Clare enjoyed the intellectual stimulation and comradeship but found the whole London experience stressful. He was forced to return to Helpstone and remain there because of his fast-growing family responsibilities. He struggled to put together a further volume of poems to the satisfaction of Taylor. However, when *The Shepherd's Calendar* came out in 1827 it was a failure. Public tastes had changed — Byron and Keats were dead and Tennyson had not yet made his name — poetry was no longer selling in any quantity. It

became a daily struggle for Clare to put food in the mouths of his family and he began to feel deserted by his London friends. Lionised by literary society he was now abandoned to emotional distress and physical starvation. He no longer felt at home in his local community — a scholar amongst rural illiterates, whose interests were purely agricultural — they were also at a loss as to how to treat him and he became like a fish out of water.

After the failure of Clare's fourth volume, *The Rural Muse*, in 1835 he deteriorated even more. Taylor visited him in 1837 and found him in a corner muttering to himself in confusion. Taylor was advised, by the doctor he called in, that Clare should be treated in an asylum. Taylor contacted Allen who agreed to take Clare as a patient. It seemed the most sensible answer to an otherwise insoluble problem. John Taylor published a book for Matthew Allen sometime in 1837, which described a modern form of mild treatment of the insane, and which claimed moderate success with advanced methods — his textbook on insanity *Essays on the Classification of the Insane*. Whether it was published before Clare went to High Beech or as a consequence of Taylor sending him there is not clear. No clear arrangement seems to have been arrived at as to whom would pay Allen for his care and treatment of the poet. For the moment Allen seemed happy to leave it in Taylor's hands.

### **Allen's Diagnosis**

There were, however, clear errors in Allen's treatment of Clare from the beginning — at least he contradicted, on occasions, the very advice he had given in his textbook which Taylor had published. Concerning first contact with patients and their removal to his asylum Allen had written:

What exactly was wrong with John Clare? This has been a matter of discussion which will probably always remain unsolved. There are several possibilities. Firstly, he was probably suffering from mercury poisoning. He had, by John Taylor's arrangement, been treated by Dr Darling of London who sent Clare 'blue pills' which were probably prescribed as the standard treatment for syphilis and contained mercury. Today we know, from current dental research, that mercury has the tendency to accumulate in the body, especially the brain, and can be damaging. Secondly, some were definitely of the opinion that Clare's genius indicated that he suffered from inherited degenerative disease. Genius began to be seen as not of intellectual or spiritual origin (some had seen it as a form of demon possession), but as pathological. By the 1860s after the publication of research by Benedict Augustin Morel in France and Cesare Lombroso in Italy genius and insanity became definitely linked in the minds of many. Morel suggested two causes for

inherited degeneration — physical disease or a decadent lifestyle. The certificate signed by two doctors, necessary for Clare's entry into Allen's asylum, is no longer extant so we do not know anything of their diagnosis at that time, but the certificate, signed by Dr Fenwick Skrimshire before Clare was taken to Northampton General Lunatic Asylum in 1841 stated 'yes' to the question: 'Does any constitutional or hereditary predisposition exist in the family of the patient to maniacal, nervous or scrofulous affections?' Skrimshire knew that Clare's parents and grandparents had shown no mental aberrations, but what he did know of Parker Clare, John's father would have seemed to him evidence of degeneration. Parker was born illegitimate, the son of a local woman and the village schoolmaster, a Scotsman, who left Helpstone before his son was born. Parker was notorious for his physical strength and a champion wrestler in the district. He was popular locally for ballad singing in public houses — he would have been, in the opinion of Dr Skrimshire, one of the lowest class. John was born a twin, his sister dying when she was only a few days old. This too could have been seen by the doctor as part of the degenerative process in the family. That John suffered occasional epileptiform fits would also have enhanced this opinion as well as the fact that he was inclined to drink too much. What Skrimshire described as John's "addiction to prosing" would have finally convinced him beyond doubt that his madness arose from inherited degeneracy.<sup>33</sup> Thirdly, Clare, when he arrived at High Beech, was on the verge of starvation. Allen recognised this immediately and fed him well from the start.

I consider it a point of the very first importance, that truth should never be violated [...] If we begin by destroying confidence, we destroy the basis on which alone all moral good can be effected. I have not found great difficulty in persuading them willingly to accompany me [...] by fully explaining the object of their removal, the treatment I intend to adopt, and the means used to make them as happy as possible in the new circumstances.<sup>34</sup>

Yet on the 15 July 1837 two of Allen's attendants arrived at John Clare's cottage, bearing a note from John Taylor, instructing him to go with them to a place where he would receive help. No other explanation was given. Clare and his wife were not even told that it was an asylum to which he was going and why or how he would be helped there. Powerlessly they acquiesced to the paternalism of those who considered themselves their superiors, and who, they presumed, knew what was best, and on whom they were forced to rely for their very survival. Besides, Clare was quite beyond being able to resist in any way. No doubt Allen was full of reassurances *after* Clare had suffered the parting from his wife and the journey from Northampton to Essex. There is extant an account given by Allen of Clare's condition on his arrival at High Beech in July, 1837. One that did not include any phrenological assessment:

His mind did not appear so much lost and deranged but suspended in its movements by the oppressive and permanent state of anxiety and fear, and vexation produced by, the excitement of excessive flattery at one time and neglect at another, his extreme poverty and over exertion of mind and body. No wonder that his feeble bodily frame, with his wonderful native powers of mind was overcome. I had then not the slightest hesitation in saying that if a small pension could be obtained for him he would have recovered instantly and most probably have remained well for life.<sup>35</sup>

Clare, he saw, was physically malnourished and emotionally in a state of grave anxiety over his social standing and financial expectations. Allen noted that he had not lost his mind and that he was responsible for his actions. He concluded that with immediate attention he could soon be declared well.

### **Allen's Treatment Of The Poet And His Partial Cure**

Allen's treatment of Clare, as all who have written about the poet agree, was humane. He was allowed freedom to roam; he was well cared for and encouraged to continue writing poetry. Sixty-one poems are known to have been written by Clare during his stay with Allen but it is obvious that he wrote more than are now in existence. He gave some away, wrote some specifically for selling and put together others that were published at the time, others he may have kept in notebooks which are no longer extant.<sup>36</sup> Allen said of him, 'It is most singular, that ever since he came, and even now at almost all times, the moment he gets a pencil in his hand he begins to write ...'<sup>37</sup> Incarceration in a lunatic asylum never stopped Clare's poetic flow, nor did it change the subject matter which inspired his genius. At home Clare had written about the natural history of his surroundings — the wild flowers, the birds and the insect life of the fens. Since his youth, he had spent hours and days in wandering the fields and fens of his home surroundings in Northamptonshire, now the totally different environment of Essex inspired him in the same way. After four months Clare wrote to his wife: 'I write to tell you I am getting better [...] The place here is beautiful and I meet with great kindness. The country is the finest I have seen.'<sup>38</sup> In Thom Campbell Clare found a walking companion. When Thom had twenty years previously walked from Amiens to Boulogne it was the beginning of a life long pleasure and pastime. Part of his willingness to settle at Allen's asylum was his liberty to tramp the forest and beyond, whenever he desired. Clare and Campbell often walked together which prompted such lines as:

I love the forest and its airy bounds,  
Where friendly Campbell takes his daily rounds;  
I love the breakneck hills, that headlong go  
And leave me high and half the world below [...]<sup>39</sup>

Clare's keen eye noted the trees and plants of the region, and the unfamiliar hills, so different from the flat fenlands. He described what he saw in his poems of that period, which capture the atmosphere of the forest



— its height, its views and its cool shade —

But I have seen full many a bonny lass  
& wish I had one now beneath the cool  
Of these high elms [...] <sup>40</sup>

It was a place to roam and rest, in which to write poetry and imagine he was at liberty. There at first he found the patience to endure until he would be really free:

And Quiet Epping pleases well  
Where Nature's love delays;  
I joy to see the quiet place,  
And wait for better days. <sup>41</sup>

The poems written after his health improved became increasingly more anxious than those quoted above. Phrases such as 'friendly Campbell' and 'Pleasant Stockdale' are replaced with angry invective against Allen, and 'Quiet Epping' becomes a prison.

When Clare absconded in July 1841 and returned home to Northamptonshire Allen noted a discharge date in the Visitors' Book with the comment 'Improved'. Allen could have claimed instead to have 'cured' him, had he sent him home two years earlier. Clare had been frail and sickly all his life and it is to Allen's credit that from the time Clare entered High Beech Asylum he became physically fit and strong and appears never to have been ill again in his life. <sup>42</sup> However, for financial reasons, his own and the poet's, Allen kept Clare too long in his establishment — an error of judgment easily made about asylum patients at that period by Allen and other alienists — and the good work he had accomplished began to lose its benefit, for Clare became delusory; a state in which he remained for the rest of his life.

His physical frailty was rapidly overcome with an adequate, healthy diet and his anxiety state lessened greatly with release from direct responsibility for himself and his family. In December 1839, after two and a half years in the asylum, Allen reported to Taylor that Clare had become 'stout and rosy in appearance'. He was cheerful and 'all life and fun'. Six months later Allen again reported 'He is looking very well and his mind is not worse.' <sup>43</sup> He had made such a complete physical recovery that he could have been returned home at this time. Allen would then have been able to claim a remarkable cure.

### **Financial Motives**

In July 1840 while claiming that Clare's mind was not worse, Allen nonetheless signed a certificate stating that Clare was still insane. He had reasons — good and bad — for wanting to keep Clare in Essex for a little bit longer. His fear, which was shared by others who were concerned for Clare, was

that should the poet be returned to his home without adequate financial income, his health would regress to its former state of malnourishment and all his efforts to improve Clare's health would have been wasted.

Allen also had concern for himself. It seems that he was fearful to let his patient go before he had received payment for his board and treatment. Taylor had failed to come up with the money. In his letter to Taylor in December 1839 he writes: 'I hope you will have some cash for me soon.' In July 1840 Allen was optimistic about efforts to raise money for Clare but makes clear his own need to Taylor:

'Some of my friends are already exerting themselves in his behalf, and I believe that they have already obtained something, and I have directed them to place it in your hands, and I shall be happy if you will have the goodness to transfer a portion of either that, or whatever you may have in hand, to my account at the bank.'<sup>44</sup>

Worries about money in general, not just for Clare, were mounting by this time. Worry was getting to Clare too.

#### **Development Of A Fixed Delusory State**

Clare knew that he was well enough to return home. He waited and his discharge did not come.

On 17 March 1841 he wrote to Patty his wife:

You will [...] be [...] well pleased to hear that I have been so long in good health and spirits as to have forgotten that I was any otherways. My situation here has been even from the beginning more than irksome but I shake hands with misfortune and wear through the storm. The spring smiles and so shall I, but not while I am Here [...] though Essex is a very pleasant county yet to me 'there is no place like home' [...] For what reason they keep me here I cannot tell, for I have been no other ways than well for a couple of years at least, and never was very ill, only harassed by perpetual bother. And it would seem by keeping me here one year after another, that I was destined for the same fate again; and I would sooner be packed in a slave ship to Africa.<sup>45</sup>

Fear and anxiety began to take its toll for a totally new reason — he began to feel that he would be imprisoned forever. His poetry began to reflect his change of mood — obsession with freedom. His home for the last four years, where he had regained health, been allowed liberty to wander in a countryside, once strange, but now full of botanical interest, now became 'Allen's Hell-hole' to him. He wrote of his being,

'Still in Allen's madhouse caged and living.'<sup>46</sup>

His expression, his language and his turn of phrase changed into the crude and bitter words found in *Don Juan*:

'And locks me in a shop in spite of law  
among a low lived set and dirty crew.'<sup>(DJ, 100)</sup>

Later, after he absconded, Allen was to write to him, showing great understanding of how he felt,

about this obsession with freedom: 'Your account of your weary journey is painfully interesting and though hope and some delusive feelings about freedom made you start and led you on I am sorry to find all these dreams are not realised but you find something wrong where you are as well as here.' 47 The problem was within the poet himself rather than where he was. Yet in his 'delusive feelings about freedom' Clare had discovered another kind of escape — in *Childe Harold* he began to write in terms of being in prison, and escaping into the Forest:

Summer morning is risen  
 & to even it wends  
 & still Im in prison  
 Without any friends  
 Still the Forest is round me  
 Where the trees bloom in green  
 As if chains ne'er had bound me  
 Or cares ne'er had been. (CH, 40 - 41)

But he also started to write seriously about escaping into fantasy:

Say What is Love — Is it to Be  
 In Prison Still And Still Be Free  
 Or Seem As Free — Alone And Prove  
 The Hopeless Hopes of Real Love [...]  
 Say What Is Love — What E'er It be  
 It Centres Mary Still With Thee. (CH, 78)

Prior to his sojourn at Dr Allen's he had frequently dreamed about a woman — a guardian angel or female divinity. She is not identified, — see for example his poem *The Nightmare* — but as the subject of his dreams and poems she is clearly the forerunner to his full-blown delusions of 1840-41.<sup>48</sup> He had found, in fantasy, what he called, the freedom of the mind (CH, 48). He found comfort and relief in memories of the past — there, it seemed to him, Mary Joyce could really be his second wife. What was latent idealism, stress now began to turn into 'reality'. Had Allen eased that stress by sending Clare home, it may not have been Mary Joyce's absence that struck him so forcefully, when he finally reached Northborough, but the joy of finding his real wife's presence there instead. It was this delusion that Mary Joyce, whom Clare had known in his youth, was his second wife, which he consistently refused to deny, that kept Clare in the asylum in Northampton from 1842 to the end of his life.

Clare also found that he could take on the personae of great men — poets, like Byron or Shakespeare, whom he considered, had succeeded where he himself had failed. He claimed to be men whom the world remembered, like Nelson, instead of John Clare, whom the world forgot. There were rough, coarse men — prize fighters — such as Tom Spring the champion wrestler, through whom, by

taking on their identities, instead of being the shy diffident John Clare, he could express all his aggression and anger. He knew who he really was, but at times he found his own personality too painful to bear. Clare composed the poem *Written in a Thunder Storm* just a few days before he made his escape from High Beech Asylum and in it he expressed the mental and emotional liberty he found in escaping into fantasy.

My soul is apathy, a ruin vast,  
Time cannot clear the ruined mass away;  
My life is hell, the hopeless die is cast  
and manhood's prime is premature decay [...]

Smile on ye elements of earth and sky,  
Or frown in thunders, as ye frown on me;  
Bid earth and its delusions pass away,  
But leave the mind, as its creator, free. (CH, 48)

It is interesting that here there is a clear reversal of his previous claim, it is not Allen's place which is hell, but his own life. It is the painful reality of earthly life that has become delusory and the products of his mind, which have become 'real'. He has made a deliberate choice to dwell in the 'freedom' which his mind gives him. This was a choice, which he stubbornly clung to, to the end of his life. It was his only comfort in the face of pain and he was never persuaded to give it up. Caged, he might be, but he had now discovered that in his mind he was free to wander where he would.

#### Attempts To Increase Clare's Trust Fund

In 1820 after Clare's first flush of success as a poet, three hundred and ninety-five pounds, fifteen shillings and sixpence was deposited in a trust fund at three and a half percent interest yielding an annual income of thirty-nine pounds. Several attempts were made over the years to bring public attention to the poet's plight. John Wilson wrote in *Blackwood's Magazine* of August 1835 an appreciative review of *The Rural Muse*, then recently published, and almost totally ignored by the British public. Such articles, however, raised very little general concern for Clare's welfare.

During the early years of Clare's stay at High Beech further contributions had been made to the trust fund and efforts were again made by some prominent people to encourage public donations. After Allan Cunningham had written about his friend's need in his annual *The Anniversary* in 1837 and S. C. Hall had written an appeal in his *Book of Gems* for Clare to be rescued from the 'Cave of Despair' in which poverty had trapped him, the Marquis of Northampton suggested that a collection of Clare's poems should be published by subscription. He saw Clare's poverty as a disgrace to the county, but none of the landed gentry of Northamptonshire responded and the scheme failed. Mrs Emerson, a long time friend and

supporter of Clare, told Clare's wife that she had contributed five pounds towards his upkeep at the asylum. This money was sent to Taylor who, along with his partners, made his own contribution to the fund. To this was added donations from Lord Fitzwilliam, Dr Darling who had treated Clare in London, De Wint, brother-in-law to Hilton who had painted Clare's portrait, and others. Allen promised Clare that when sufficient money had come into the fund he would allow him to return home. For a short time Clare was content in the routine of his life and the pleasure of his surroundings in Epping Forest.

#### **Allen Pins His Own Hopes On His Famous Patient**

From mid 1840 Allen devoted his energies to raising money for John Clare. He gave a lot of time to this venture and seemed to believe that Clare's plight, when publicised, would not only bring in sufficient funds to support him for life, but would perhaps benefit Allen himself by bringing his work and his asylum into the public view. He may have even hoped it would bring visitors of social standing to High Beech to visit Clare, who would become a new, wealthy, philanthropic group of potential clients, some of whom might place their own insane relatives into his care. Probably, having given up on Taylor, he was also seeking re-imburement for the cost of his caring for the poet.

1839 to 1840 was a time when High Beech Asylum reached its maximum number of patients (See Chart 1 on p120) and it would seem on the surface that having reached a peak, both of patients and income, that Allen would have been content. But these very circumstances led to a serious set of difficulties. Evidence from the Visitors' Book shows that his accommodation was crammed full.<sup>49</sup> All three houses were full of patients and his large family had moved out of Fair Mead House into the cottage at Fair Mead Bottom. Later they were to take patients into the Cottage as well and, ultimately, Allen was forced to rent neighbouring Fair Mead Lodge, the property of the Sothebys, for his own family.<sup>50</sup> So at this period his pressing priority was to expand his asylum — both accommodation and patient numbers. The latter only to pay for the housing — it had become a spiralling problem.

By this time Allen's serious financial troubles were beginning. In 1840 his major benefactor George Cooke would have been eighty-four years old had he survived that long. It is more likely that he would, by then, have died. Any money that would have come to Allen from his wife at the time of his marriage, would by then have suffered twelve years of heavy demand and could well have been running out.

Of more significance is the fact that by 1840 Allen had met Henry Wood, from whom he wished

to purchase a machine for carving wood by a steam driven process. It is possible that Wood was the father or brother of one of Allen's patients.<sup>51</sup> Allen was unwell — with developing heart trouble, tired by the years of unrelenting, demanding work, and possibly now under the stress of newly accumulating debt. Coincidental with his meeting with Wood was his meeting with the Tennyson family who had come to live in the neighbourhood. Alfred came to stay as Allen's guest, in August 1840. Allen, unable to do anything to develop the wood carving process without capital, saw Alfred Tennyson as a highly suitable investor. Allen revealed his state of mind in his confession to Tennyson that he hoped to make a lot of money with his new machine, so that he would no longer need to look after insane people.<sup>52</sup> Allen seems, for many of the above reasons, to have lost his vision and his own sense of reality. He had just been through the most fruitful and rewarding years of his life where he could say of himself that he had succeeded. The proof was visible in what he had established around him and in those whom he had successfully treated. Previous to his life in Essex, he could be seen, at least as a partial failure, and certainly as a man still seeking success. To once again invest in a manufacturing process was to go back to a world where he had proved himself to be unsuitable and unskilled. The lure of wealth, and rest from the strain of other people's problems, clouded his vision.

Fifteen years of development must have brought its own financial profits. This seems backed up by the fact that, despite these strains and the bankruptcy which was to follow, the asylum continued to function, without a break, on to Allen's death and beyond. No patients were ever forced to transfer to other institutions. The burden of Allen's heavy losses appears to have fallen on his family. By 1843 his cry was: 'I have utterly ruined myself, every stick and stave is to be sold to pay Alfred Tennyson.'<sup>53</sup>

Thus in 1840 he needed ready money in order to expand or go under — or as he hoped — make his fortune in woodcarving. His first priority was to pay Henry Wood for the machine. He saw in Clare a source of income and was not eager to discharge him until he had milked the situation of all its financial potential. He set about a planned strategy:

Along with John Taylor he printed and distributed a hand bill which explained Clare's illness, highlighted Dr Allen's so-far-successful treatment, outlined the trust fund which supplied Clare and his family with thirty-nine pounds a year and appealed for five hundred pounds from the public in order to increase this fund and thus Clare's annual income to sixty pounds.<sup>54</sup> Money could be sent to Allen, Taylor, their lawyers, who were named, and two banking firms who had consented to open books for the purpose. In June 1840 an anonymous letter, published originally in the *Halifax Express*, was printed in *The Times*,

stating that the poet John Clare, who had for some years been confined in The York Asylum, [sic] was dead. This gave Allen an ideal opportunity. In his reply published in *The Times* he announced to the world that Clare was very much alive and being cared for most successfully in his own elite establishment and that all he needed was the financial support of a benevolent public before he could be sent home, cured. The Athenaeum noted the above facts in a long article and added its voice in appealing for support for Clare, whose poetical talents, it assured the public, remained unaffected by his mental alienation: 'He is at once Saul with the troubled spirit and David with the exorcising harp.'<sup>55</sup>

With Clare's permission, Allen attempted to sell some of his poems written at High Beech. We have two examples of letters from Allen to potential buyers. The first is to a Mr P. S. Ackerman and shows the double motive of the writer — concern for the welfare of Clare, and that he himself should receive some acknowledgement for his caring role:

Why show respect to the mere handwriting and no humanity to the man or his family? I pledge myself, that if a small annuity could be secured for him, he will very soon recover and remain so — and yet people desire the autograph of a man who, but for me, would have been a hopeless case permanently confined and lost in the mass of paupers in some public Establishment, or perhaps what is worse, exposed to the idle gaze of fools.<sup>56</sup>

The other is to the Reverend Thomas Wilkinson of Worcester written from High Beech on 30 July 1840 and contained the poem *Song: By a Cottage in a Wood*.<sup>57</sup> It was signed by John Clare and inscribed 'written by the Northamptonshire Poet while confined at Dr Allens, High Beech 1840'. It is possible that this poem was written especially for sale. For a short period Clare collaborated with Allen to try to sell his poems and boost the amount in his trust fund. However, he later lost hope in Allen's scheme when there was a total lack of response from the public to support him.

The following year, left in despair of ever succeeding financially from his poetry, he wrote his satirical poem *Don Juan*. It shows his anger at the beggaring of his talent. Having failed to sell his poems as himself he imitated the Byronic style in order to sell himself as Byron. The poem 'markets itself as a commodity' and mocks at the poet's need to depend on the charity of his readers:<sup>58</sup>

Now i'n't this canto worth a single pound  
From anybodys pocket who will buy [...]  
So reader now the money-till unlock it  
& buy the books & help to fill my pocket. (DJ, 100-101)

At least one person responded immediately and favourably to Allen's initial appeal for Clare in *The Times*. A gentleman, Charles Clarke, living at Great Totham Hall near Witham, not far from High Beech, offered,

as a concerned supporter of Clare, to publish a volume of his most recent poems entirely at his own expense. Allen replied to this offer in a letter on 23 July 1840 and agreed to collect the poems together. In January 1841 Clarke complained bitterly to Mrs Clare: 'I should have been able to have brought out the little volume by this time, but for the extraordinary neglect (if not something worse!!!) of the said Dr Allen [...] I have written three or four letters to him on the subject [...] without obtaining any answer from him whatever!!!' <sup>59</sup> Allen, possibly mistrusted Clarke, and did not take up his offer. Like so many others, Clarke's motives were not really clear. <sup>60</sup> In his letter to Patty Clare, Clarke is obsequious in the extreme, asking her to let him have some of Clare's early work for his own collection. Also if he produced a volume it did not necessarily mean getting money, but meant more hard canvassing in order to sell it. There was for Allen, no time for this. He had a further idea.

He went to see Cyrus Redding, the editor of the *English Journal*. Redding, no longer a co-editor with Campbell, nevertheless knew Thom Campbell well and knew about Allen's establishment. In April 1841 Redding paid an unannounced visit to High Beech Asylum. <sup>61</sup> Thom Campbell was out in the forest, Allen too, was away but Redding did find Clare working in the fields where he conversed with him. On this visit, or very soon afterwards, Redding obtained the collection of poems for which Charles Clarke had been asking. Allen suggested Redding should publish an article about his asylum and/or about Clare. The two men corresponded on the matter, Redding showing interest in particular in Allen's methods of treatment. On 15 and 29 May 1841 he published an article in two parts about Clare and Allen in his *English Journal*. He quoted in full twenty new poems of Clare's and included a description of him out in the fields at High Beech, making also an eloquent plea to the people of England to be generous in their support for one of the country's rare geniuses. Of Clare he wrote: 'Genius attaches itself to what is excellent [...] however insignificant [...] and raises and adorns it, dresses it in "orient-pearl and gold", casts around it a witchery of its own and places it before "the wondering upturned eyes" of mortals as something well nigh divine.' <sup>62</sup> He was complimentary too about Dr Allen.

Allen was, therefore, ultimately successful in his quest to sell Clare's work. We do not know what Redding paid for the poems — we have no proof that he paid at all — but it is unthinkable that a respectable editor of many years standing would publish in his own magazine the new work of a man so greatly in need of money, without paying him for it. Yet what he paid does not appear to have gone to John Taylor and been added to Clare's trust fund. The capital for Clare's annuity was never increased. What happened to the money earned by the sale of his poems? Allen, having received nothing for his care



of Clare during all the time he was at the asylum, finally submitted a statement of expenses to Taylor sometime between July and November 1841, for the surprisingly small sum of one hundred and forty-eight pounds. As Allen never voiced any discontent after sending in his bill it must be assumed that he received the payment. The only details about income to the fund are to be found in Edmund Blunden's biography of John Taylor, *Keats's Publisher*. The original documents from which he quoted no longer appear to be extant. He quotes Allen's letter to Taylor — the letter which also included his bill for Clare, — and then Blunden writes: 'The expenses from July 1837 to July 1841 had been only some £148 towards which Mrs Emerson, Darling, De Wint, Earl Fitzwilliam, Allen, J. A. Hewson, H. Clarke, R. Smith, some others, Walton and of course Taylor had subscribed almost £80.'<sup>63</sup> No mention of the poems or Redding is made. It is hard to see why not, if his payment was received into the fund. The words 'some others' are tantalising, but it is hard to believe Redding, as such a major contributor, would be included by them. Had Redding sent the money to Allen who took it as part payment for his work? This seems very possible. Why did he not then state this to Taylor and claim the one hundred and forty-eight pounds as a part, or final, payment? As it stands, Allen's fees for the poet come out at fifteen shillings a week — far less than any other private patient would have been charged, though fairly expensive compared with parish rates. Allen comes out of it as a generous and warm-hearted man. It is a great pity that any shadow of doubt should remain regarding Redding's money. It adds to the accumulating occasions when Allen's dealings with money became suspect. As the accounts both of the asylum and the trust fund are no longer extant the exact details can never be known.

Taylor maintained an unblemished record of care for Clare's money and for his family until the end of his life: (He) 'Remained the attentive friend of the Clares, keeping the account of the trust with minute care, sending presents and advice'.<sup>64</sup>

#### **What John Clare's Poetry Reveals About Dr Allen's Asylum**

The early poems written in Essex, some of which are quoted above, concentrate on the solace Clare found in the natural surroundings of the forest. Mention is made of the pleasant attendants who walked with him, of Thomas Campbell, of the gypsies he met and the plants and scenes, which he observed. His poetry acted as an escape from his pain, a refuge from the harsher facts of his situation. By 1841 his surroundings were no longer congenial but had become like the confining walls of a prison; his pain and frustration had increased so much that he could no longer find escape in writing 'ordinary' poetry, but wrote instead satire describing the asylum as a place of rape, buggery, cruelty and long solitary

confinement for some. The subjectivity of his poetry, his anguish and overwhelming desire to return home, bring into question the actuality of what he wrote. Nonetheless the content of his poems cannot be ignored when forming an opinion of Allen's work.

Nigh Leopards Hill stand All-ns hells  
The public know the same  
Where lady sods and buggers dwell  
To play the dirty game. (37)

He viewed Allen as he did all the other well-meaning, well-off, middle-class, people who had tried to help him throughout his life — the other doctors, Darling and Skrimshire, aristocrats, churchmen and bishops wives—the figures who became in Roy Porter's phrase 'his collective super-ego'.<sup>65</sup> They were kind but unable to share his pain; their motives were often hypocritical and selfish. Allen was just another such an one:

Earth hells or b-gg-r sh-ps or what you please  
Where men close prisoners are or women ravished  
I've often seen such dirty sights as these  
I've often seen good money spent and lavished  
To keep bad houses up for Doctor's fees [...] (DJ, 98)

Clare is equally as scornful of the treatment given. This mad house is no dispenser of a moral regime, but is in fact, a 'whoreshop' full of low sexual practices. Clare's use of sexual images perhaps mirrors his own sexual frustration which is evidenced by several extant records. In a *Letter to Mary* in one of his notebooks used in the first half of 1841 he writes:

I wrote a new canto of Don Juan to pass the time away, but nothing seemed to shorten it in the least, and I fear I shall not be able to wear it away. Nature to me seems dead and her very pulse seems frozen to an icicle in the summer sun — what is the use of shutting me up from women in a petty, paltry place as this merely because I am a married man and I dare say though I have two wives if I got away I should soon have a third [...] <sup>66</sup>

Cyrus Redding recorded Clare talking of his separation from his home and family, his loneliness away from his wife [...] his great desire to return home and to have the society of women.<sup>67</sup> It seems that Allen had recently had reason to curtail Clare's contact with the female patients by some sort of ban or confinement to his own quarters. In *Don Juan* Clare writes as the victim — denied his sexual rights. Thus for the author of *Don Juan* Allen's place is constantly a Hell.

Clare also writes as the rebel and carps against the conventions of religion and society:

I love good fellowship and wit and punning [...]

I do not like the song of 'cease your funning' [...] (DJ, 95)

*Don Juan* became the vehicle through which Clare fulfilled a threat he had voiced many years before, in 1820, after Lord Radstock had objected to certain passages in *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* as verging on the obscene. Clare had written to Taylor: 'Damn that canting way of being forced to please I say — I can't abide it and one day or other I will show my independence more strongly than ever.'<sup>68</sup> He saw Allen too as a kill-joy and moralist. *Don Juan*, used by Clare as an expression of anger and despair, caricatured asylum life, making Allen a demon figure and his fellow patients demonised — their madness exaggerated — endorsing the myth so often believed about asylums, by those who had never entered one, that they were dark, frightening places peopled only by the raving mad.

The poem expresses his bitterness against women. He rages at the pain that women have caused him:

Wherever mischief is 'tis woman's brewing  
Cheated from man's self to be man's ruin. (DJ, 90)

He also rails at the responsibilities with which married life has crushed him

The road to marriage is -'a road to ruin' [...]  
A hell incarnate is a woman-mate [...]  
A wife is just the prototype to hate. (DJ, 90)

*Don Juan* is written as anti-literature — as a deliberately uncouth caricature of Byron's original verse. An attempt not only to devalue the prototype but also to bring literature in general into disrepute. If Clare has no power to turn society inside out he can certainly do so to literature and to literary reputation:

Though laurel wreaths my brow did ne'er environ  
I think myself as great a bard as Byron. (DJ, 99)

These are flowing couplets — but he can just as quickly turn them into crude language:

Lord Byron poh — the man wot rite the worses. (DJ, 99)

The poem was in its own way a rape — a rape of literature and a taunt at the great poet who had inspired it. Literature, pursued by Clare all his life, like some enticing siren, was in his own opinion, also his ruin. During his last years at Northampton General Lunatic Asylum he told a visitor: 'Literature has destroyed my head and brought me here.'<sup>69</sup>

A man there is a prisoner there  
Locked up from week to week.<sup>70</sup>

These are lines about how Clare saw things rather than how they were in reality. It has to be

concluded that, as no other evidence supports Clare's statements, the picture of High Beech Asylum in *Don Juan* and a few of his minor poems is one that only existed in Clare's head. Under an extreme sense of isolation and rejection by his reading public he used his bitter satire as a means of hitting back at society, its morals and conventions, and at Allen, the representative who implemented the social policy, which he felt had consistently, not only failed to benefit him, but had contributed towards his destruction. *Don Juan* was his catharsis — a release from years of pent-up anger.

Physically Allen had cured Clare; mentally Clare had deteriorated while kept institutionalised against his will. Allen had played an important part in the poet's life but neither knew of the important role the poet would play in his doctor's future reputation. Without Clare, (and Tennyson) Allen would possibly have disappeared into obscurity forever and posterity would certainly have known much less of his work amongst the insane.

#### 6.2.2.4 Septimus and Alfred Tennyson

In 1837 the Tennyson family moved to Beech Hill House, High Beech, from Somersby in Lincolnshire. They remained three years and became acquainted with the Allens. The two families were neighbours and friends. Mrs Tennyson and her daughters befriended Mrs Allen and her stepdaughter Mary Anne, and Alfred Tennyson called frequently on Matthew Allen.<sup>71</sup>

There was a history of mental instability in the Tennyson family. Alfred's father, a clergyman in the Church of England, and father of twelve children, was eccentric, violent and an alcoholic. His brother Edward was suffering from insanity and was to spend the rest of his days in the York Asylum, crazy and incurable. His brother, Arthur, suffered periods of instability and alcoholism and spells spent in private asylums and a sister Matilda was decidedly eccentric from childhood. Another brother, Charles, suffered from opium addiction. In 1834 when Septimus Tennyson was nineteen years old, Alfred had written to his uncle:

I think it my duty to inform you of Septimus's state of mind [...] my grandfather is thinking of letting him stop at home two or three months longer. If this is acted upon I have very little doubt but that his mind will prove as deranged as Edward's [...] every hour which he wastes at home tends to increase his malady [...] he is subject to fits of the most gloomy despondency accompanied with tears [...] He spends whole days in this manner complaining that he is neglected by all his relations. [...] He should be removed as far as possible from home and into some place where new objects and the example to others might rouse him to energy.<sup>72</sup>

At some point after 1837 Septimus placed himself under Dr Allen's care as a voluntary patient

and stayed at High Beech Asylum for long periods over the next six years. Legally there was no such class of patient, as it was required by law for all patients to be certified as insane by two independent doctors before they could reside at an asylum, and for their name to be on the list held by the Visitors of the Court of Quarter Sessions. Septimus Tennyson's name is not in the Visitors' Book in Essex and was never officially associated with the asylum. However, without doubt he was treated by Matthew Allen. Allen made a strong plea for the treatment of voluntary patients in his *Essay on The Classification of the Insane*, in order to pre-empt the development of insanity, and avoid the stigma that went with certification. Allen would have seen Septimus as someone who would benefit from voluntary care.<sup>73</sup> Septimus was someone at high-risk who needed urgent treatment *before* certification became necessary. The Doctor was soon to come into conflict with the authorities on this matter — Septimus was not the only voluntary patient that Allen entertained under his roof.

At the beginning of 1840 the Tennyson family moved house again to Tunbridge Wells. Septimus stayed on at High Beech. On 5 May 1840 he was, 'In his own room' at Fair Mead from where he wrote to Alfred.<sup>74</sup> Because of a quarrel with the head attendant, William Stockdale, he had left the asylum for a time and only just returned. He tells his brother that Allen has, 'discharged the craven hearted bully' [Stockdale]. His dismissal was evidently the condition on which Septimus agreed to come back to Allen's asylum. That he knew Stockdale was from Yorkshire is clear but it is not clear whether he realised that Stockdale was Allen's nephew. Stockdale may well have left the asylum at that time but neither he nor Allen took the matter as seriously as Septimus hoped. Just a year later 'W. S.' is recorded in the census returns as 'Superintendent' at Leopards Hill.<sup>75</sup> Clare had called him 'Pleasant Stockdale' in one of his poems, but that probably contained more than a touch of poetic licence.<sup>76</sup> Stockdale was born in Gayle in Wensleydale, son of Jane Allen, Matthew's youngest sister. His father seems to have been a good-for-nothing and perhaps deserted the family when William was a child. William would have been educated at the same village school as Matthew Allen but because of the family's poverty, probably had no further education. Margaret Stockdale, who also worked as an attendant at the asylum, was either his sister or his wife.<sup>77</sup> They were both dependent on their uncle's charity. Maybe William endured this humiliation in the hopes of inheriting the asylum from his uncle, but by 1851 none of the Stockdale family appear on the census at High Beech.

We have no record of the specific treatment given by Allen to Septimus. Though he remained unstable all his life, Septimus was never institutionalised elsewhere. To that extent Allen was successful in



Figure 11

Alfred Tennyson as Allen would have known him. A detail from the portrait by Samuel Lawrence c.1840.

his intervention. At the end of 1843 Septimus left High Beech for the last time and went to Italy with his brother Arthur to stay with their eldest brother Frederick. Arthur had, himself, just been discharged from the Crichton Royal Asylum in Scotland.

Alfred, like Septimus, was subject to moods of black depression. It was, in the days between 1829 and 1845, when his position as a poet was by no means established, and his relationship with Emily Sellwood, his future wife, remained uncertain that Alfred suffered from hypochondria and came closest to succumbing to mental derangement. He found Allen a hearty enough fellow, but was not totally convinced by his methods, and was happy to let Septimus be the first to try them.<sup>78</sup>

In August 1840, after the family had moved away, Alfred returned as a guest of the Allens and stayed at Fair Mead House for two weeks. Tennyson's engagement to Emily Sellwood had just been broken off. The reason for this break was believed to be on her father's insistence, because Alfred had no means or prospects for earning a living, but it is thought by some that Alfred himself withdrew from the commitment. Dr Allen, as has been already noted, had specific views on marriages between emotionally unstable couples and the development of insanity. It is very possible that he influenced Alfred against his alliance with Emily. Alfred wrote to her in July 1840 saying enigmatically that he must: 'Fly her for his own good ("perhaps for thine, at any rate for thine if mine is thine.")'. His reason for expressing himself in this way becomes clearer and, 'takes on a rather more specific meaning' when one considers he was writing from High Beech and fresh from conversations with Allen.<sup>79</sup>

Unsettled, unsure of his future and refusing to yield to friendly pressure to publish his work, he was also uneasy about his mental state which he feared might be hereditary.<sup>80</sup> Earlier in the year it had been said of him: 'Alfred is really ill in a nervous sort of way [...] having spoiled what strength he had by excessive smoking.'<sup>81</sup> Did he go to Fair Mead as a patient? There was probably a tacit agreement between him and Allen that he was there for observation and treatment, but nothing of the sort was ever put on paper. Certainly Allen was concerned about Tennyson's anxiety state when he wrote to him, after the visit, on 17 August 1840: 'I have been very sad since we parted and I can hardly tell why, unless it were because you were so out of spirits. I hope that by this time your family circle has taken them all away and that you are now as happy as I can wish you to be.'<sup>82</sup>

By this time the two men were in a close relationship and involved in their business deal. Alfred had enjoyed his stay at the asylum but felt unconvinced of its curative possibilities and was slightly patronising towards its inmates. During a meal, when Allen had been called from the room, a patient had

threatened Tennyson with a knife from the table. He wanted to know why the poet was wearing a monocle — a thing Tennyson always did at meals, due to his very poor sight. The spontaneous and irrelevant reply 'Vanity my dear sir, sheer vanity', amazingly seemed to calm the patient and the incident amused rather than terrified Tennyson. He said he had had a: 'Study of the ravings of the demented at first hand'<sup>83</sup> and, 'He was delighted with the mad people whom he described as the most agreeable and reasonable persons he had met with'.<sup>84</sup> If his visit did nothing else it brought assurance of his own sanity for he definitely saw himself as, other than these.

The suggestion has been made that it was Allen's kindness to Clare that was one cause of Tennyson's attraction to him, but there is no concrete evidence that Clare and Tennyson ever met.<sup>85</sup> Given that Alfred frequently visited Allen, however, it would have been most unlikely that the two poets never set eyes on one another. There is in fact an account where they are mentioned as being at Allen's asylum on the same afternoon.<sup>86</sup> What is more significant is that Clare has left no written record of meeting Tennyson. It seems that although Tennyson probably knew Clare by sight, the latter was never introduced to him, or it was never explained to him that the visitor was also a struggling poet whose works had been published without, so far, much success. Whatever the reason, and given Clare's often expressed desire to converse about poetry with someone knowledgeable on the subject, it is difficult to understand why Allen kept him in ignorance of Tennyson's work, or why Tennyson held aloof from his fellow poet. Allen apparently failed to see any mutual therapeutic possibilities for them or perhaps felt their class difference would cause constraint.

Alfred had at least two other spells of some duration under Allen's care, during neither of which he was regarded as an official patient and nothing of his condition was recorded.<sup>87</sup> He was officially simply a guest of the family at Fair Mead House. He was there in September 1841 when he was visited by his close friends Henry and Franklin Lushington who sarcastically remarked that Allen's only mania at that time was the wood carving scheme.<sup>88</sup> Many of Alfred's friends (Edward Fitzgerald, James Spedding, Edmund Lushington to name a few) who met, knew about, or wrote about Matthew Allen were sceptical, scathing or full of doubts about the doctor. No one seemed to have a good word for him but Alfred, and he kept his feelings to himself. It was probably more of a concern that Alfred should be receiving treatment in an asylum and a desire to make light of their fears for him, than actual knowledge of Allen, that led to their negative remarks. We only have partial knowledge of how involved Allen was with the Tennyson circle. He was probably more involved than is generally thought. It appears, for example, that Allen



phrenologically examined the head of James Spedding, Tennyson's friend, who had been part of the group with him at Cambridge University known as The Apostles.<sup>89</sup>

In January 1842, after the wedding of his sister Emily, Alfred took his other sisters to London where they lodged in the house of a madman who had to be taken off in the night in a straitjacket, after a fit of violence. Alfred was so upset by the incident that he again spent a month at Fair Mead under Allen's care.<sup>90</sup> It is impossible to know the effect of Allen's treatment. Whatever good it may have done would have been wholly offset by the total breakdown, within the year, of their relationship and the collapse of their business venture. It is noteworthy, however, that although Allen was condemned, berated and called a great deal of unpleasant names by all the Tennysons and their friends, Alfred included, the latter never scorned or questioned the doctor's professional ability.

Having completely broken off his association with Allen at the end of 1843, Alfred could not return to High Beech for further treatment. He spent the next five years having hydropathic treatment for long spells at three different English spas. In 1848 he proclaimed himself cured. It is not clear of what he was cured. All his life he had dreaded developing the epilepsy from which his father had suffered. He had, since boyhood, experienced strange trances preceded by startlingly clear auras, which he feared was an incipient form of epilepsy. Two of his hydropathic consultants diagnosed the trances as a symptom of Gout and Alfred, convinced that they were right, was finally 'cured' from his terror of developing fits, and no longer felt barred from marriage prospects due to any possible congenital epilepsy in his future offspring.

In 1855 Tennyson completed his poem *Maud* which he had been planning and putting together over a long period. The storyteller is an orphan whose mother has died in poverty subsequent to his father's suicide after a failed speculation encouraged by a wealthy neighbour. Here from the start we have echoes of the author's relationship with Allen. The brooding obsession conveyed by the narrator of the poem at its opening, with its 'fine and justly famous lyrics'<sup>91</sup> is one of the great passages of the poem. The wealthy neighbour returns with his beautiful daughter, Maud, with whom the narrator falls in love. He wins her love in return, but her brother is antagonistic to the match and the former kills the latter in a duel. He then flees the country. When he hears that Maud has died he goes mad. Later his recovery is effected when he fights for his country in war. The scene in Bedlam, particularly the final hundred lines of Part II, where the madman thinks he has been buried alive is another scene of great effect and presents a compelling image of madness. The editor of the *Asylum Journal of Mental Science*, J. C. Bucknill, reviewed the poem in the October issue of 1855 and said that it contained, 'true psychological possibilities' and that it was, 'a

remarkable sketch of poetic mental pathology'. Tennyson had of course got his background material from several sources, besides those close to home, having a lunatic brother locked up in York and several others who were very unstable, but his own experience of madness and asylum life came straight from Dr Allen and High Beech Asylum, enabling him to enter the mind of a lunatic and give his poem the authenticity to make it great. Bucknill wrote to Tennyson saying that nothing since Shakespeare has been so good for madness as this.<sup>92</sup>

Allen, as seen through the eyes of the madman, was the inspiration again in lines 274-275 of the poem and here Tennyson speaks with a voice remarkably like that found in Clare's Don Juan:

And yonder a vile physician blabbing,  
The case of his patient — all for what?  
To tickle a maggot born in an empty head,  
And wheedle a world that loves him not,  
For it is but a world of the dead.

From these accounts of patients at High Beech Asylum, gathered from a variety of sources, a picture emerges of what life was like for Allen's patients under his care. Both he and his wife Elizabeth lived daily amongst the insane who they treated as an extension of their own family. They concerned themselves as much as possible with individual problems and dealt with them as far as possible on a one-to-one basis, as they arose during the activities of the day, whilst organising the household, sharing a meal, tending the grounds or socialising in the evenings.

His moral treatment called on the patients' reasoning abilities to take control of, and responsibility for, their own actions and emotional responses. He believed it vital to have knowledge of his patients' characters — through phrenology he gauged their weaknesses and strengths. Knowledge of their past histories — their successes, failures, hurts and habits — was of equal importance to enable him to insinuate slowly into their minds the possibility of change. When a patient was excitable he encouraged a measure of calm, and where depressed he attempted to stir their interest. The aim was for them to reach a state of equilibrium. Anger was channelled into activity and frustration given a chance of harmless expression in isolation. He used the motivation of rewards and punishment and of approval and disapprobation based on a desire to please. This in turn was based on a relationship of trust and affection built between himself or his wife and their patients.

Above all this chapter shows Allen's preference for treating patients whose illness was still only threatening. He wanted to intervene before they settled into an habitual frame of mind, resulting in mad

patterns of behaviour. His approach was to persuade them to come for treatment before they had to be sent. He encouraged their participation in their own cures; he wished literally to help them to change their own minds — their ways of thinking and reacting. He was even keener to achieve prevention than cure. His plan of selectively mixing mild patients with manic as a stimulant to encouraging self-control seems not always to have worked. It may have occasionally worked as a shock tactic, a positive use of fear in a mind still able to reason, but seems to have depended for success on individual self-awareness, as was the case with Alfred Tennyson.

Whatever was done to achieve a cure needed persistence and consistency and the co-operation of the patient. It was of immense importance that Allen's aim always remained one of cure, even with long-term patients. He did believe this possible and never settled for stagnation in a patient or for management alone. He did not, however, claim one hundred percent success. He groped most of the time for solutions, in a mist of false premises, clinical ignorance and his own colourful fantasies. Compassion and practical knowledge built on experience helped him achieve a remarkably high rate of cure amongst a majority of sad failures.

Probably his biggest failure was John Clare. The cause was a dilemma well known amongst alienists of the time. It was a matter of judgment — knowing the time when confinement would do more harm than good and when it was the right moment for a patient to return to his home. The possibility of Clare's starvation should he return home, hung, like a shadow, over this decision in his case. Allen's judgment failed here. Holding him too long meant Clare's ruin — not a lingering death by starvation but a lingering life spent mostly in captivity.

## Chapter VII

### Allen And Children

#### **7.1. Children, Under The Age Of Ten, As Insane Patients**

An unusual feature appears in the patient lists of High Beech Asylum. Three children, under ten, were treated by Allen, all of whom were certified insane.<sup>1</sup> They were all admitted by their fathers and remained only for short periods, one month, three months and three months and two weeks. Remarkably the Visitors in Lunacy failed to comment in any way on the age of these patients. It seems unlikely that they were isolated amongst the adult inmates but probably remained within the family at Fair Mead and lived as one of Allen's own growing family. In 1836 when the first child patient was admitted the Allens had, as well as the three born to Matthew's first wife, and by then adult, four small children of their own, aged one, three, five and six.<sup>2</sup>

These child patients may have been brought to Allen as a result of the publication in 1831, and a reprint in 1834, of the second edition of his book *Lectures on the Temper and Spirit of the Christian Religion*, first published in 1820 when he was working at the York Asylum. The book included a large section *On The Importance of Early Education* which also formed a part of the sermons he had preached to his patients at York. The treatment of the children at High Beech could perhaps be viewed as partly experimental. If he pursued his ideas further it is unfortunate that we do not have any results of his researches. We have no information about the children's maladies or Allen's specific treatment, but we do have his views on childhood and parental care in his book.

#### **7.2 Allen's Experience of Children and Childhood**

What was Allen's experience of children in 1820 when he first wrote *On The Importance of Early Education*? We already know the kind of childhood he had had himself. He had experienced discipline and teaching which had developed from the eighteenth-century evangelical revival with an emphasis on original sin and the need for parents to gain complete submission over their children's will. When he quarrelled with his father, during his apprenticeship in York, he rejected aspects of his own experience and developed his own views on many subjects, including how to bring up children.

He had three children in his first marriage. Their early years would have been very turbulent with their father twice being in prison. They moved about between the care of a foster mother, while their own mother stayed with their father in prison, and their maternal grandmother and aunts in Lancashire. When Matthew Oswald, Matthew Allen's eldest child, was five, his sister Mary Ann four and Thomas just a year, their mother died and they were put into the long term care of their aunts in Lancashire. This was the situation in Allen's own family when he wrote his book *Lecture on the Temper and Spirit of the Christian Religion*, which contained the large section *On the Importance of Early Education*. It was a treatise largely concerned with the responsibilities of parenthood and yet just two years later his brother Oswald received the following letter from Matthew's brother-in-law, Richard Snape:

I am going to make an appeal to you in order to reach the heart of another, in behalf of three children under the roof and protection of my Mother and Sisters [...] I see no prospect before them but that of unceasingly cruel privations, not to say worse, if they be not aided from some quarter in their benevolent exertions for the benefit of these children [...] nor am I calling upon you to do it, only so far as your influence is concerned with your Brother [...] I understand he has obtained a situation bringing him in £150 a year, the £50 of which I understand he gained in consequence, of it having been said that he had three children to maintain. What can he mean after having obtained such a situation, and a part of the emolument under such pretences and yet not send anything [...] for the benefit of his family, and not to attempt to ease those who so generously exert themselves in their behalf? <sup>3</sup>

The above highlights the contradictions in Allen's character. He, who so often spoke about the importance of truth, appears to have defrauded his employers. While apparently so absorbed in his work of caring for others, he totally neglected the care of his own children. Apart from buying books immediately they were published, in order to keep up with the latest treatments, there is no evidence on how Allen spent his money. Maybe he gave it away to the poor he saw around him, maybe he spent it on clothes, luxuries and the high life of York. His brother had his own ideas as to how Matthew spent his money — on society and amusements, flattering his own vanity and neglecting his duties. The evidence of such spending, however, is not there and it has to remain a mystery of his complex character. Matthew patently failed to follow his own advice and to live up to the standards that he set himself. The integrity of his position and salary at the asylum is decidedly questionable. His problem, it may be argued, though not in itself a justifiable excuse, was his inability to handle money and the enormous debts which he had at the time. There is no evidence that he led a very active social life outside the asylum. His responsibilities there would have left insufficient time for that. Thus far he had failed miserably as a responsible parent. We should therefore, perhaps view the sermons he preached and the book that he wrote as an admonition to himself as well as his hearers — a lesson in Biblical exhortation, rather than an exemplification of his own

success. When his second family was commenced in 1829, his financial circumstances were apparently stable and healthy and he may well, when given this second chance, have determined, this time, to carry out his own previously avowed principles.

In 1831 an incident occurred which must have appeared to underline his earlier failure and perhaps strengthened his resolve to succeed with his second family in a way he apparently did not with his first. This incident may also be the reason why he issued a second edition of his book that year, first written in 1820. Matthew himself did not write of the following occurrence. It is known about solely through his brother's Memoirs, where it is presented with all Oswald's bitterness and dislike for his brother, unsoftened by the passing of time.<sup>4</sup> Oswald records receiving a series of letters — the first in 1831 — from his nephew Matthew Oswald Allen, his brother Matthew's eldest son by his second wife. He quotes his own replies in full, but unfortunately supplies no copies of his nephew's originals. The letters came from Ireland where Matthew Oswald, then nineteen, was a private in an infantry battalion. Oswald expresses strong disapproval that any member of their family could stoop to such a lowly and degraded position in life as a mere foot soldier. This came about, his nephew had explained, because of his own father's intransigence. He had refused to accept him back into the family home after he had departed from a position in the navy. He had then joined the army simply to keep himself alive. Could his uncle have some influence with his father? Oswald wrote to the young man's commanding officer and enclosed money for his nephew's use. He wrote to his nephew explaining that he had ceased to communicate with his father since the latter's behaviour towards him on his departure from York in 1824, his return of a letter by a servant, open and unanswered etc. He would have nothing more to do with his father, he said, unless he received an apology.

Six months later Oswald received another letter from Ireland. This time his nephew said he was about to be sent with his regiment to the West Indies. He wanted to quit the army but needed money urgently. Money was sent and nothing more was heard for a year when Matthew Oswald wrote again, still in Ireland and still in the army. Oswald wrote to the boy's aunt, his mother's sister, in Lancashire and received a partial explanation. Oswald had written that the job of a common soldier was not suitable for him 'considering his education'. It is hard to know what his uncle knew about the boy's education as he had ceased to have any direct contact with his family. We know nothing about the system under which the Allen children were educated and only that Paterson Allen (eldest son of Elizabeth and Matthew) became a surgeon/apothecary, probably through a seven-year apprenticeship such as his father and uncle had served.

Matthew Oswald had resided with his mother's family in Lancashire until his father was able to provide a home for him in Epping Forest. He would have been fourteen years old when he moved to the south of England — a natural time for a change in his education or the commencement of an apprenticeship. Either he had been sent to a public school at that time or started an apprenticeship that he did not complete. Their nephew, his aunt wrote, had expressed a wish to join the navy and his father had gone to a good deal of trouble and expense to help him achieve his desire. Presumably Matthew Allen had used his social contacts and bought his son a commission, which the latter had then resigned for some trivial reason, without consulting his father. Allen stresses again and again in his book the importance of the parent keeping his word, especially with regard to just punishment. His refusal to have his son at home again must accordingly have had something to do with an agreement they had had to which Allen was determined to remain true. So in some sense the republication of his book was a measure of self-justification for his own seemingly hard attitude and actions towards his son.

Oswald terminated the correspondence with his nephew by a very formal letter making it clear that he would supply no more money, and implying that the boy was simply using excuses to get as much out of his uncle as he could.

### **7.3 Allen's Essay: 'On the Importance of Early Education'**

At the time when Allen originally wrote this section of his book, there had been a long running public debate concerning children, childhood and education and many educational systems had been proposed and some put into practice. There was no legislation regarding compulsory education in Britain and the education of the individual rested on his or her social class, the money available and the preferences of the parents. Many parents failed to see the value of education beyond the very rudimentary skills and most of the poor received no education at all. Allen, in his book, stresses that education in the home begins from birth and goes on well beyond any formal structures. His aim is to alert parents to the responsibility of their position, to make them consider education in its broadest sense and also the variety of systems on offer and their merits or otherwise. In the following summary of his book Allen's views are given alongside the popular views of the time.

#### **7.3.1 Parental Example**

The first section of his book is a call to parents to set an example to their children by their own behaviour.<sup>5</sup> He emphasises the great responsibilities parents take on, especially the father. He urges men

not to marry at all if they cannot discipline themselves — for by their example their children will then be undisciplined. Allen calls for 'adult passions to be subjugated by reason'. (285 and 330) He believes in the Lockean concept of *Tabula Rasa* that a new-born child is like white paper and the first imprint on this paper is made by the 'force and beauty of a parent's living example' (286). John Locke, the late seventeenth-century philosopher's work, *Thoughts on Education* had been influential throughout the eighteenth-century. Locke's approach has been termed 'plastic'. He saw children as wax that had the potential to be moulded into the right way by parental training and authority through discipline and reason.<sup>6</sup> Allen stresses the effects on the personality of childhood influences and the depth of the first impressions made on the mind. This impressionable period is short and once past it becomes extremely difficult to erase what has been learnt. He stresses, 'Mistakes here are ruin forever'. (299)

During the eighteenth-century evangelical revival John Wesley founded an education system of his own, and considering Wesley's influence on James Allen, it is most probable that he would have approved of this system and applied Wesleyan principles to the teaching and discipline given to his children within the home.

Wesley believed if education was God-centred all would be well.<sup>7</sup> Wesley had three sources for his ideas. Theologically he believed that children were all inheritors of original sin and soon fell from the state of grace received at baptism. Matthew Allen having abandoned this evangelical view, with which he was brought up, no longer believed in original sin in the Biblical or Wesleyan sense but rather, like Locke, that sin was acquired. 'Their sins so acquired may indeed be called original', he says, 'as it regards the parents. Is it not necessary that the original from which children have to acquire all this should be as perfect as possible, for how can a [perfect] copy be taken from a faulty original?' (286) Wesley's educational theory, though influenced by Plato, Milton and Locke was chiefly drawn from the Port Royal Schools who aimed to preserve their pupils in the innocence of their baptism.<sup>8</sup> The Moravian Schools at Herrnhut where children were trained up for holiness and the enjoyment of God in eternity were equally as influential with Wesley.<sup>9</sup> In England Dr Doddridge's school for girls also impressed him.<sup>10</sup> In practice, however, Wesley was most influenced by his own experience. He followed his mother's pattern. Susannah Wesley had seventeen children and she undertook all their early education. Her love for them was without question — she gave each of them their own half hour with herself every day during their early years — but she has become notorious for her firm belief that children had to be broken of their self-will. She believed that the parent who indulged self-will did the devil's work. She said: 'Self-will is the result of all



sin and misery [...] whatever checks and mortifies the will promotes their future happiness and piety'.<sup>11</sup>

Allen believed, however much fear or force might seem to preserve authority, it is in appearance only, and in reality when force is used 'all influence and usefulness is gone forever'. (287) Failure to set an example that would back up their precepts results in the essential authority of parents being undermined.

### 7.3.2 Systems Of Education

A widespread and influential educational system was developed by Maria Edgeworth and her father which they explained in their book *Practical Education* in 1798.<sup>12</sup> Allen quotes several pages from this book in a long footnote. Rationalist and utilitarian, the Edgeworths argued that pleasure, not fear, should be the motive for learning. They taught that virtue has its own reward and that bad behaviour is a result of poor judgement rather than original sin. Their educational method was based on observation and the accumulation of facts. This led to the development of, what some considered, shallow values — developing the minds but not necessarily the characters of children. The system was often caricatured in the literature of the time depicting children who had plenty of useful knowledge but no imagination.<sup>13</sup> They disapproved of fantasy in children's literature, such as fairy tales, that taught no inherent lessons, as opposed to myths or fables that contained morals.<sup>14</sup> Matthew Allen's only reference to children's literature in his own work similarly makes a plea that heroes in children's books should be men that can be safely emulated for their moral values. He says: 'Let not children have tales of ambition adorned with flattery and false titles of servile men but let them have those of virtuous and benevolent men'. (360). He made the same plea concerning tales of war, which, when written of with false glory, he said, misled the young and encouraged them to approve of slaughter and maiming.

In 1815 Jeremy Bentham's book *Chrestomathia* argued for a national, secular system for the middle and upper classes composed basically of useful learning. With the support of James Mill, his system had widespread influence. The appetite for knowledge was the first and most striking thing displayed in the minds of infants and it was the parent's duty to feed that appetite well. Allen says: It is 'one of the worst evils, if not the very worst in a parent to neglect to store the mind with useful knowledge [...] The mind which is left unoccupied and without any taste for information will be led by the animal feelings and not by the understanding. And if to this ignorance self-will be added, ruin is almost certain'. (305-306) This was confirmed again and again to Allen in his life-long dealings with the insane whose lunacy he was convinced had roots in childhood.<sup>15</sup>

The modern technique in schools of, 'giving children knowledge by putting questions rather than answering such as are put by their instinctive feelings' (n357) is frowned on by Allen. He praises the Quakers for their scheme of education that encourages children to question and to find out the answers for themselves. He says: 'I believe an approach to this plan is common among some of the more modern and intelligent Quakers, and perhaps to this we may attribute in part the general taste for knowledge, which is now beginning to distinguish them as a body'. (n358) A series of schools were set up from about 1803 by a Quaker, Joseph Lancaster who gained the patronage of George III. They were economic and strict. The ideal was to have schools of one thousand pupils taught by one hundred monitors each in charge of ten pupils at a fee of five shillings per pupil per year. Punishments were meted out in public in order to humiliate and deter. This does not seem to be the kind of Quaker education Allen had in mind.

The French author and philosopher, Jean-Jacque Rousseau, believed in the essential goodness of human nature, rather than original sin. He wrote the novel *Emile* in 1762, to illustrate his philosophy of 'natural' education.<sup>16</sup> The chief rule of education, said Rousseau, is not to save time but to waste it. He disapproved of parental intervention but said that if children were left at liberty to follow their natural desires they would consequently, without effort, acquire knowledge from the world around them. For Allen this is too haphazard. Only partly in sympathy with Rousseau he asks the question 'Do we follow nature or do we resist her glorious designs, instead of following, assisting, cherishing, guiding and regulating her movements?' (359)

It was Rousseau who first propagated the idea of the Noble Savage. In his encouragement of parents to allow nature to take her course with children, he set up uncivilised and unknown cultures as ideal examples of the unspoilt and natural. Supporting this view, Allen has a footnote in his book from Captain Basil Hall's account of the Loo Choo Islanders saying how the youngsters of that place were encouraged by their elders to be observant of all around them. Full of life and spirits, they were nevertheless respectful and well trained in manners.<sup>17</sup>

This attitude was directly opposite to the approach of John Locke. The differences between Rousseau and Locke are typical of the nature/nurture debate about children which continues today. Allen, in most of what he writes, attempts to steer a middle way between the excessive indulgence of rank Rousseauism and the extreme severity of strict Wesleyanism.

### 7.3.3 The New Phrenological Approach To Education

In *On Early Education* Allen quotes from 'A "friend" whose good sense and high integrity of mind does one good to think upon'. (n353) His 'friend' is George Combe and he quotes from *Essays on Phrenology*, written in 1819, the year before Allen's own book was published:

If a parent [...] manifests the faculties of benevolence [...] or covetiveness, [*sic*] strongly and habitually in the presence of a child, the same faculties will [...] be cultivated and excited into permanent activity in the child. [...] There is no doubt a faculty of imitation which gives the power of mimicry and which unquestioningly exerts an influence in disposing the child to imitate his seniors; but there is besides, an identity of faculties, and a sympathetic influence arising from similarity of constitution, that makes a child prone to do, acts which he sees done before him. [...] As a general rule however, for cultivating the moral powers, it may be safely laid down that [...] the regular active manifestation of faculties in parents excite into habitual activity similar faculties in children. [...] the parent who inflicts personal chastisement, often, and in a rage [...] cultivates in the child the faculties which give rise to the emotions of rage and resistance [...] Whatever you wish your child to be or do, be that or do that to him.<sup>18</sup>

Combe's was a new contribution to the education debate. Developing the good faculties of the brain in children who manifested potential in certain enlarged cerebral organs, and discouraging the development of other less positive faculties, had never been considered before the introduction of phrenology by Gall and Spurzheim. Combe postulated that the education of children could go far further than had previously been thought, even to the production of genius in some, no matter what class or environmental background they came from. It is disappointing that Allen makes little further comment but simply gives his approval to Combe's own words. His readers would have been amongst the earliest to receive a phrenological view of education.

Allen favoured home education for as long as possible. Parents should not send their children away to school to escape their own responsibility by getting them out of the way. He disapproves of the mechanical learning by rote in so many schools. This, he says, taking the phrenological view, 'Exercises only one organ or faculty to the exclusion of many others of as much or more importance [...] sometimes the finest minds are overlooked or ruined [...] It is the co-joined exercise of the faculties I contend for — that of giving to each its relative and appropriate time, place, and degree of cultivation necessary to form the man.' (358-359) Allen saw the value of a balanced all-round education contributing to a balanced personality in adulthood. This he also saw as a preventative to the development of insanity, particularly to monomania. Irrational fears, or exaggeration of any topic as more important than all others, needed the supply of counterbalancing information and development of cerebral faculties to prevent an irrational and sometimes dangerous reaction by a person of narrow views or unbalanced temperament.

### 7.3.4 Disciplining Children

Allen very clearly rejects severity in relations with children. Severity, he says, leads to deceit, suspicion and revenge. Repression and terror will reverse fearless innocence, as cunning and intrigue will be found by the child to be the only possible means of opposition. Harshness will never win true allegiance, because it will never convince the individual mind. He stresses the wickedness of any religious person who aids and abets severity, as it produces in the victim the very behaviour it is intended to abolish — behaviour against the temper and spirit of religion — anger and a spirit of revenge. Severity, Allen believed, was: 'The seed and food of all the brutal and ferocious passions, while kindness sows and nourishes every good and benevolent feeling'. (315) To prove his point he goes into a long aside about the old methods of treatment of the insane and a description of the *Casa da Pazza*, an asylum in Piedmont where chains and deprivation were used, as compared to the newly introduced mild treatment of the insane. (This section he notes did not form part of his original sermon.) Parents who discipline with severity, he says, know nothing of, 'The omnipotence of love and have never tried the noble experiment of overcoming evil with good'. (326-327) By contrast, affection and patience bring out all that is good in a child, rendering severity unnecessary.

Allen moves on to discuss the development of self-control in children. He begins with an example given by Dr John Haslam about a child who was out of control by the age of two and allowed to have his own way and never corrected for another seven years. All attempts to adopt a corrective system after this entirely failed. Allen clearly states that in his opinion failure to acquire self-discipline, 'Is the cause of 9 cases out of 10 of the incurably insane. It brings ruin on the finest minds.'(332) He then describes, as an example, a patient in the York Asylum at the time of writing, physically ill from over eating, a habit acquired in childhood from an over indulgent mother. He quotes a long passage from Locke's *Thoughts on Education*, part of which is as follows: 'The fondling must be taught to strike and call names, must have what he calls for, and do what he pleases. Thus parents by humouring and cockering them when little, corrupt the principles of nature in their children, and wonder afterwards to taste the bitter waters, when they themselves have poisoned the fountain.'(334-335) Susannah Wesley was emphatic in the use of the rod from a year old. When a child cried for something he desired he should, she said, never be given it — that would undo the parent's authority. Children were to be made to do what they were told. Allen discusses the use of the rod or physical punishment, which in his view should generally be avoided. He first remarks:

Some seem to think they must literally use the birch rod because Solomon (in the book of Proverbs) has made use of that expression, which of course means correction after any mode; and even if it meant that the rod, must, as the Puritans of England and the Presbyterians of Scotland thought, be employed, still it ought to have been remembered that we profess to live under milder directions, and under a celestial and spiritual King whose sole law, to produce good subjects, is love. (338-339)

He is certain punishment with the rod will never be necessary if from infancy a system of approbation and disapprobation has been consistently held to, and where parental authority has never been allowed to be doubted. This authority too has to be subtly imposed: 'They ought never to assume the upstart, ignorant or proclaiming tone, or the language and dogmatism of a teacher'. (340) Here Allen follows Rousseau directly: 'Again [...] perfect mastery of the child is sought, not through overt discipline but through engaging Emile's affections. "Spare nothing to become his confidant. It is only by this title that you will truly be his master." As Rousseau writes elsewhere, children, "like lions" must be "tamed by kindness".'<sup>19</sup> The picture of taming 'like lions' also applies to the insane who like children needed mastering with kindness.<sup>20</sup> The latter had not yet developed self-control whereas the former had lost the control they had and reverted to childish behaviour. Parallels can be drawn here with what Allen advised in *Essays on the Classification of the Insane* about treating the insane the same way as one would treat children through rewards and punishments which he described as 'A species of discipline like that of a nursery'.<sup>21</sup>

A footnote is inserted at this point in Allen's book to show that there are methods of obtaining obedience, other than beating. He describes his own experience with a spoiled child who was refusing to go to school:

When I felt my anger completely under my control, I took him between my knees and obliged him to look me full in the face; [...] I coolly reasoned with him, repeating continually, 'Are you not ashamed? Are you not sorry to give [...] your Grandmother so much pain? Are you not a bad boy to behave so ill to her who has done everything for you?' In this way I continued to reason with him, showing him if he did not what other people wished who knew what was best for him, he would make everyone about him unhappy and himself most so [...] for no one would love him [...] good conduct would make him liked by everybody [...] Choose to be wicked and welcome [...] remember that your Grandmother and everyone will have done with you forever. Thus I continued to reason with him for a very long time [...] He from his heart asked pardon and promised to go to school. [...] I required the house (servants and everyone) to be somewhat shy with him, to give time to increase and deepen the effect. (342)

He emphasises the constructive use of love of esteem and aversion to disgrace to encourage obedience in a fashion which is neither harsh nor indulgent and which calls on the parents themselves to be patient, firm and above all persevering.

Children, he says, have correct instinctive impressions of justice. Here and elsewhere Allen sides with those who considered childhood as the time, not only of innocence but also of natural insight beyond, and superior to, that of adulthood. The Romantic poets, notably Blake and Wordsworth, took up Rousseau's ideas of the closeness of childhood with the natural world and added their own notions which saw childhood as an idyllic time when the imagination was at its strongest.<sup>22</sup> As the nineteenth-century progressed the strictness considered necessary to train children's sinful wills into submission gave way to greater tolerance. The Wordsworthian idea that the child is the father of the man took hold and children began to be seen as angelic, spiritually more superior than adults were, and with a greater visionary capacity. Parents were considered to be at fault, some even cruel, in the over-disciplining of their offspring. By mid-century this was being expressed in such popular literature as *Dombey and Son* (1848). Thus Allen warns, if correction exceeds the crime it will incite disrespect and any attempt to alter the punishment brings contempt and loss of authority. Correction must be made by a cool mind and punishment backed up by withdrawal of affection until repentance is offered. Giving way to the child's tears because one fancies 'I cannot bear the pain my correction will give him' (349) is, in its ruinous results, as bad as any tyrannical temper.

A popular present day view of Victorian children was that they were always to be seen and not heard. Allen was at pains to encourage children to be listened to: 'There cannot be a more important duty than this attention to children.'<sup>23</sup> (354-55) In treating the insane similarly to children Allen also developed one-to-one relating and listening in his asylum practice. In the latter part of *On the Importance of Early Education* he points out that, children asked many questions 'and were seldom properly gratified'. (354) The parent's job is, he says, to co-operate with nature and not resist their children's natural curiosity. Observing their surroundings was instinctive. To allow nothing to escape one's attention is the conduct of a philosopher, (or scientist), and, as a general habit, should be developed in the child as far as possible. He points out the Biblical injunction for adults to become as little children and never to be too wise to learn themselves.

### **7.3.5 Conclusion — Synthesis, Application And A Possible Attempt At Further Development.**

It becomes apparent in reading Allen's work that he was not generally trying to be innovative, and produce any new educational theories of his own. Apart from stressing the phrenological view, he was otherwise content simply to draw out the best from all the most popular and acceptable works on the

subject, as is often done when composing a sermon; and we must remember his material was originally gathered for that purpose. His stress was not therefore so much on the theories but on the fact that the best of them be applied and that children's early education should not be neglected as unimportant but taken up by responsible and informed parents.<sup>24</sup> And, as all good sermons should be, it was spoken from the heart, he himself knowing the failure of often not applying what he knew in his own family circumstances, as mentioned above.

This synthesis of views he sees as applicable to prisons, and asylums as well as schools. Throughout, he stresses that parental authority is comparable to the authority of governments, and what applies to the former is applicable to the latter. Governors should encourage rather than 'over legislate'. (362) In discussing the duties of the State he makes clear his support for the abolition of the death sentence. He quotes from William Roscoe's, *Essays on Capital Punishment*, published in Philadelphia in 1811, and republished by Allen's friend Basil Montagu.<sup>25</sup> Cruelty of the State, he believes, is as deplorable as cruelty of parents.

Allen implied that he himself had suffered some kind of nervous breakdown early in his career. There are references in his books that seem to hint at his own personal experiences of mental illness and indicate that the fault lay in his family relationships. For example he wrote:

The greater number of those who lose the power over their own minds are from among those who have been unaccustomed at an early stage of their existence to exercise a salutary control over their feelings and habits; and those especially such as naturally possess strong animal and sentimental feelings. [...] Thus [...] an only child, or the youngest (who has often as much exclusive attachment as an only child) because he is the son of old age, or is young when the rest cease to be children; or may be the only one left at home, are numerous amongst the insane.<sup>26</sup>

Although apparently writing the above with complete objectivity, there are so many parallels with Allen's own childhood it is hard to believe that at the time of writing he was not thinking of himself. When his second wife died his mind was thrown into a state, 'Which', he wrote, 'may be deemed by some out of place and by others affected'. He continued:

When such circumstances happen to one, not only possessing warm feelings by nature, but which a succession of strong and peculiar excitements have, throughout life, encouraged, supported and augmented, it may easily be conceived that such an occurrence, itself associated with every circumstance of horror, might produce on one so constituted, misery and distraction to an unusual degree and duration.<sup>27</sup>

This apparent breakdown, along with his own experiences in childhood, and with young insane

patients appears to have led him to research into childhood insanity, the results of which we know very little about. We don't, for example, know the truth about, or have any figures to prove, his statement above about many amongst the insane being 'only' children. What it did lead him to suggest was that the roots of adult insanity could be found in childhood, in cruelty or lack of discipline and in parent/child relationships. He wrote that 'domestic circles are fruitful in producing insane cases'.<sup>28</sup> This area of conflict, which Allen emphasised, can be described as pre-Freudian theory. Though never fully expanded by Allen it covered the ground and postulated the causes which Freud was later to confirm. It has been said of Freud: 'His work [...] caused a re-evaluation of the importance, which attaches to early family relationships and their effects on the developing personality'.<sup>29</sup> In his essay *On the Importance of Early Education* Allen also called for this same kind of re-evaluation which, in his case, went almost completely unheeded.

Allen was obviously convinced that negative influences from childhood, of parental harshness, indiscipline or neglect, contributed towards the development of insanity in adulthood. His attitude to the insane was often the same as his attitude to children and he wrote: 'All principles applicable to the management of children are equally applicable to them' (the insane)<sup>30</sup>. As the insane had failed to learn lessons of self-control in childhood, and had often suffered from emotional neglect, he saw their sojourn in his asylum as an opportunity to teach them childhood's lessons over again, and to rebuild their confidence in relationships, through his own and his wife's individual care for them.

Convinced that mental and emotional habits formed in childhood by lack of discipline resulted in little development of self-control, and led in turn to insanity in adulthood, Allen sought ways to intervene in children's development to prevent insanity. He stressed two new elements in dealing with children — that they should be encouraged to ask questions and helped to find the answers by adults who were willing to listen to them. Their interests and development should be broad, requiring the use of all their mental faculties, ensuring a balanced personality.



PART IV

DISINTEGRATION AND DEATH

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUCCESS CRUMBLES INTO FAILURE

#### 8.1 Life Beyond The Asylum

Though Allen's success as an alienist depended on his personal involvement with his patients there are many accounts of him socialising with the sane, away from the asylum. He felt confident enough about his regime to leave his patients in the hands of attendants from time to time under the supervision of his wife. There was an obvious need for him to get away in order to maintain his own equilibrium and to prevent ill health through stress. His convivial personality thrived on relationships with people and he had many genuine friends as well as those who found him too eccentric to take very seriously. Allen was aware, as were Tennyson and Clare, that the life of London throbbed not far away — its lights could be seen from certain high points in the forest. The metropolis was a constant lure to him, but he also had good friends nearer home in the local community.

##### **8.1.1 The Neighbours**

Several of Allen's closest neighbours spoke well of him and his work. By all accounts he was well liked in the neighbourhood. Nearby were the homes of Sir Julien Arabin and the Rt. Hon. Admiral Sir George Cockburn. Closest to the asylum lived William Sotheby until his death in 1833. He was a poet and playwright of some standing and counted amongst his friends many notable literary figures such as Sir Walter Scott, Samuel Rogers and Lord Byron. These were wealthy men and Tennyson wrote rather unfavourably of their society. He felt unable to match their lifestyle and neither probably could Allen though he undoubtedly tried. Tennyson wrote

The people are hospitable, but not in a good old-fashioned way, so as to do one's feelings any good. Large set dinners with stores of venison and champagne are very good things of their kind, but one wants something more; and Mrs Arabin seems to me the only person about who speaks and acts as an honest and true nature dictates; all else is artificial, frozen cold, and lifeless.<sup>1</sup>

It was a remark, made by Sotheby, that lets us into a side of Allen's life not spoken of elsewhere. It appears that Allen tried to obey the Biblical injunction to carry out his good deeds unbeknown to others. However, his neighbour knew and spoke of Allen's, 'General benevolence and continual attention to the wants and maladies of the poor in a very extensive neighbourhood, without any reward but the benefit

which may accrue to them from his professional skill'.<sup>2</sup>

His medical colleagues in the local area also spoke well of him. Apart from their professional relationships with him some of them were also personal friends. There were John Brown of Waltham Abbey, a surgeon/accoucheur who delivered all Elizabeth Allen's children, and Thomas Morgan, surgeon of Woodford. It is probable that Allen's oldest son, by his third marriage, was apprenticed to one of these men. They both sent many patients to Allen for asylum treatment. John Carr Badeley MD F.R.C.P., physician to the Chelmsford Dispensary and one of the official quarterly Visitors, was also a personal friend of the Allens and possibly had a relative who was a patient in his asylum, as he said that he visited the asylum independently of his official duties.<sup>3</sup>

### 8.1.2 Further Afield

The asylum appeared not to be too far out from the city to attract many visitors, other than those connected to the patients. This was especially so after the railway came to Woodford in Essex in the late 1830s. The station was only three miles from the asylum. Some of these visits are documented and those of Jane Carlyle and Mrs Epps have already been noted. George Swire, friend and publisher gave another picture of the Allen family in their own home. As a frequent visitor he always felt happy taking part in, or contributing to, their various amusements and held nothing but the most pleasing recollections. 'He [...] joined the family worship at which many of the convalescent patients and all the attendants that could be spared were present. Mrs Allen was organist and Dr Allen delivered enlightened, interesting but plain, familiar and affectionate discourses [...] he (Swire) never joined any devotional exercises with more heartfelt pleasure.'<sup>4</sup>

The advent of the railway made it easier to travel in both directions and Allen often succumbed to the lure of London. His own brother, Oswald, refers to a chance meeting with Matthew and his son Thomas on Ludgate Hill in 1829. Carlyle met him in the crowd that watched the Houses of Parliament burn down on the night of the 16 October 1834. He had not seen Allen for two years and invited him to call on him at Cheyne Row. Jane Carlyle records her disenchantment when during the subsequent visit Allen remarked to her husband that she had 'the remains of a fine woman' — and she was only thirty!<sup>5</sup> In the 1840s Allen and Alfred Tennyson frequently met in London. They went together to see Carlyle but the latter, being out, they sat in the garden and smoked until he arrived home. The Carlyles had been keen to be introduced to this rising star on the poetical horizon. They were much impressed with the poet and

became life long friends. It is not certain, however, that this visit was their first introduction and whether Allen can be credited with bringing the two parties together for the first time or not. For a short period Allen even considered renting a house in London at 12 Bedford Row.<sup>6</sup> However, this plan never came to fruition.

Allen had medical colleagues in the city, such as surgeon Charles Harris and was a friend of Samuel Ashwell a surgeon at Guy's Hospital. Another friend was Dr John Epps a pioneer of homeopathic medicine, a member of the Finsbury Discussion Group and proprietor of *the Christian Physician and Anthropological Magazine* to which Allen contributed. In looking at some of the articles Epps wrote for his own periodical the impression given is that, like Allen, he too was somewhat eccentric. However, he was not seen like that in his own day. He lectured at the private medical school at the Westminster Dispensary in Gerrard Street — The Gerrard School — and it was said of him: 'He was an excellent speaker, spoke always to the point and had a dry quiet humour which made him a favourite with his audience [...] usually thoroughly up in the subject he was treating.'<sup>7</sup>

Dr George Birkbeck MD was a friend of long standing. When first coming to Essex Allen had addressed the Mechanics' Institute in London. This institute had been founded in 1823 by, among others, Henry Brougham (later Lord Chancellor), Francis Horner and Dr George Birkbeck. The latter was the founder of the Mechanics' Institutes movement, which had begun in Glasgow. Birkbeck was a Yorkshireman, educated in Science and Medicine in London and Edinburgh and had been professor of chemistry at the Andersonian Institute in Glasgow. Here were three large areas of interest that he had in common with Allen. To the end of Allen's life Birkbeck remained a friend. Brougham certainly knew Allen, or about him, for it was he who later spoke up in favour of Allen's *Pyroglyphs* and his woodcarving scheme.<sup>8</sup>

Thomas Campbell wrote of entertaining Allen in his own home in Duke Street in London over a period of years and it was probably through Campbell that Allen and John Taylor became acquainted. Taylor, well known as publisher to Keats and Charles Lamb, was also official publisher to the new London University. Campbell had been associated with the founding of the university and it probably was he who recommended Allen's asylum when Taylor was looking for a safe haven for John Clare.<sup>9</sup> There were a flush of books on asylum treatment on the publishing market at that time and Taylor would have welcomed the opportunity to publish Allen's work *Essay on the Classification of the Insane*.

Allen first met Charles Augustus Tulk (1786-1849) at the London Phrenological Society which was inaugurated in 1824. Tulk was one of its early presidents. In 1841 Allen wrote of him: 'He has been my intimate friend for these last sixteen years, knowing most minutely everything about me and my plans.'<sup>10</sup> Tulk had earlier written that he knew Allen intimately and 'He believed him to be a man of worth, humanity and honour. He had visited Leopard's Hill and Fair Mead and witnessed the singular attention paid by him and Mrs Allen to the comfort of the patients.'<sup>11</sup> Though, as pointed out in chapter V, there were some matters of disagreement on which Tulk and Allen seemed to be on opposite sides. For Tulk, who was an M.P., when it came to providing care for the insane, politics and economy were all-important tools; for Allen, the vital matter was treatment. Tulk must have had Allen's methods explained to him on many occasions. He nevertheless failed to discern, when chairman of the governors at Hanwell Asylum, that his political support for total non-restraint and its consequences subtly undermined the kind of treatment Allen promoted.

Tulk was an ardent believer in the mysticism of Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) and a founder member of the 'London Society for the Publishing of Swedenborg's Works'. Allen, with his wide variety of reading, must have had a general interest in Swedenborg's science — particularly his works on chemistry, but because of his own experience of Christian sects, avoided Swedenborgian theology. Allen never mentions Swedenborg in any context, scientific or theological. In a letter to Tennyson, he mentions 'my friend Clissold'<sup>12</sup>, probably Augustus Clissold, curate at St. Mary's, Stoke Newington, who left the ministry of the Church of England about 1840 and became an enthusiastic translator of Swedenborg's works.<sup>13</sup> Clissold became a member of the Swedenborg Society in 1838 and would have known Tulk and been mutually acquainted with Allen.

There were many whose friendship drew Matthew Allen to London but his membership of several societies also gave him reason to visit the capital. He held membership of the Phrenological Society, the Medico-Chirurgical Society, the Anthropological Society and the London Meteorological Society. For the first and last of these he held Corresponding Membership. In the case of the former, which he joined in 1824, in the early days of his asylum work, because he would not always have been able to travel into London for meetings; in the latter he had been a member while living in the north, since at least 1823. Membership of these and a wide variety of other societies was overwhelmingly male and catered for the stereotypical early Victorian gentleman with wide interests in the developing new sciences. This gave opportunity for the individual to contribute through discussion, to raise questions and voice opinions

among his peers, who mutually encouraged pursuit of knowledge through experimentation, record keeping and the delivery of papers on wide-ranging matters.

While Allen sought the company of colleagues, and friends, and courted those in high society, ever on the watch for wealthy clients who could use his discreet advice about how to deal with family members suffering with mental problems, how did Elizabeth Allen spend her time?

### **8.1.3 Family And “The Incomparable Mrs Allen”**

Little is known of the background of Elizabeth Blane Allen. She was born in Scotland about 1803 making her twenty years younger than her husband. Matthew and Elizabeth had ten surviving children. The eldest three were the children of Mary Snape. The eldest of Elizabeth’s own sons was named Paterson, which was possibly her maiden name. It is possible that Dr George Murray Paterson, who was at the Royal Barracks in Calcutta in 1826, was Elizabeth’s brother.<sup>14</sup> He claimed to have heard Matthew Allen of York lecture on Phrenology, before he went to India.<sup>15</sup> It is also possible that they had met in Montrose which was one of Allen’s lecture venues. There is no supporting evidence, however, for these tenuous links. Matthew said of his wife ‘From family connections she was accustomed to move in the first circles, and more especially for some time previous to her marriage was in one continued scene of gaiety, and was always remarkable for her buoyancy of spirits.’<sup>16</sup> But his wife, although from upper-class origins, seems generally to have avoided society. She is reputed to have refused invitations from her neighbours at High Beech and said, ‘I have too much to do at home to visit for my own pleasure.’<sup>17</sup> She worked closely with the asylum staff and it appears she was liked and respected by them and William Stockdale said of her: ‘She exerted herself very much [...] she was up and dressed at 6.30am to see that all were up and active. Her zeal, exertion and manners and powers of pleasing (were) superior to anything he had ever seen.’<sup>18</sup>

The man who had safely delivered all her seven children, John Brown of Waltham Abbey, said of her and her partnership with her husband:

(She is) singularly qualified and adapted, from her accomplishments and cheerfulness, her lively and pleasing manners to be an active co-partner and an invaluable blessing in such an important concern, conducted on enlightened principles and invincible kindness. They possess the rare combination of talents best suited and most essential for the efficient discharge of the various arduous duties in their situation.<sup>19</sup>

John Carr Badeley said of Allen: ‘He has the advantage of being married to a lady who devotes her whole time and attention to promoting the comfort and happiness of the patients by her tender interest in their

real or imagined afflictions and an affectionate and consolatory intercourse with the females contributing very essentially to their recovery.'<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth's unfailing support, the money she no doubt brought with her, her resilient nature and attractive personality both to patients, clients, guests and professional and business acquaintances carried Allen through the toughest times. She was unquestionably his greatest asset in his work and justified the title once given her by their neighbour, William Sotheby — 'the incomparable Mrs Allen'.<sup>21</sup>

Just when all seemed to be going well, after their many years of labour, the Allens were suddenly overtaken by a change in their fortunes. The ground began to slip away under Matthew Allen's feet in a series of reversals. What had been gains now became losses.

## 8.2 Disintegration

### **8.2.1 The Loss Of John Clare**

On 15 July 1841 Allen's most famous patient successfully absconded. Believing he would never be released because his friends had forgotten him, and that they would never contribute, what would be considered by Allen, sufficient money for his upkeep, Clare planned his escape. He met some gypsies in the forest who advised him of the route to take. In a few days he was home in Northampton, hungry, weary but none the worse for his tramp of eighty miles.<sup>22</sup> Allen sent for Clare but as he was so much better his wife wished him to remain at home for a trial period.

Clare wrote to Allen explaining what had driven him to escape. It is notable that he made the same criticism of the asylum that had been voiced by Septimus Tennyson: the oppressive attitude of the staff and attendants:

I can be miserably happy in any situation and any place and could have stayed in yours on the forest if any of my friends had noticed me or come to see me — but the greatest annoyance in such places as yours are the servants and stupid keepers who often assumed as much authority over me as if I had been their prisoner and not liking to quarrel I put up with it until I was weary of the place altogether.<sup>23</sup>

#### **8.2.1.1 Clare's Complaint**

Acquiring good patient attendants was an increasing problem in most private asylums at that time. In well-run and well-motivated institutions, finding intelligent and dedicated staff to do the menial tasks involved with the care of maniacs, for low wages, was well nigh impossible.<sup>24</sup> It was a constant struggle to attract new staff, keep up their morale and maintain their services. Most asylum attendants were poorly

educated, unreliable, and rough in their manners, with many often showing harshness or cruelty. Dr Allen's asylum was no exception in this and changes in personnel at High Beech are frequently noted in the existing records.<sup>25</sup> At this point in his life — with his attention constantly demanded elsewhere — Allen must have felt the grave lack of a competent and reliable assistant in his work.

Patients being largely cared for by attendants and only distantly watched over by the superintendent was a common problem in asylums and a major factor in the frequency and misuse of restraints. Untrained and over-stressed attendants tended to use instruments of restraint indiscriminately and for their own convenience, rather than as moral or protective measures to aid their patients. Experienced, caring superintendents could alone assess each case and the benefit or otherwise of restraining measures. When patient numbers increased above a certain level, or superintendents became too busy, individual and personal care was impossible. The close overseeing of each patient by Allen put an unendurable stress on him, to which he finally succumbed.

Allen had no immunity when it came to exhaustion and lethargy and the split responsibilities of work and family. In the first years of his work the patients and family shared accommodation and meals in the same house and the Doctor and his wife were called upon to lead balanced self-controlled lives twenty-four hours a day, year in and year out before the eyes of their patients. Sometime in 1840 the Allens 'moved out' and by the April of 1841 when the census was taken they were living in the Cottage at Fair Mead Bottom, probably on the land of the Sotheby's, and rented from them.<sup>26</sup> Leopard's Hill, the men's residence, some miles away, where Clare lived, was under the care of William Stockdale who, a year previously had supposedly been sacked by Allen after complaints about him from Septimus Tennyson. On the census returns he is recorded as the 'Superintendent' at Leopard's Hill Lodge. It appears Allen had relinquished at least some of his control to his nephew, as he was himself, by this time, almost totally taken up with his wood carving business and struggling to survive financially. The asylum and its patients, including Clare, were beginning to feel touches of neglect. Allen was taking on more than one man could handle and his wife, whose seventh child was born in early 1841, had her hands full at home.

#### **8.2.1.2 Allen's Reply to Clare:**

Allen wrote back to Clare on 18 November 1841, by which time he was under great personal strain in his business and in his relations with the Tennysons.<sup>27</sup> He makes reference to his waiting correspondence and says, 'On my attention to them depends in a great measure my means of support for



my numerous family.' Yet despite this pressure he is able to clear his mind, set aside his worries, and focus solely on Clare. He writes:

I am glad to find you think that I ever wished you to be made as happy as possible and that it was not my fault if you were not always so. For wherever you are you will find that this is not always in your own, still less in the power of another — much more depends on ourselves than we are willing to admit. We should adapt and submit to do the best we are able whatever may be our circumstances in life, and in doing so we may be sure we shall have rest and peace and these are the best medicines for the mind and body, though they are not yet inserted into the *Materia Medica*.<sup>28</sup>

His letter is remarkable for its sympathetic, caring tone, practical advice and insight into Clare's mind and his search for freedom. It is evidence that either his patients came before his personal distress and that he was able objectively to keep in mind the need to maintain their standard of care, or that his own personality was divided enabling him to maintain the role of the mad-doctor in charge, separately from his frantic attempts to rescue his disintegrating personal life. Either way, this letter to Clare is calm, caring and unhurried, while in vivid contrast, his hasty notes to Alfred Tennyson in this same month are almost illegible.<sup>29</sup> Of Clare's complaint about the attendants he writes:

As to Pratt he has left us. I was obliged to turn both him and Smith and Martin away because they loved talk and drank more than [most]. That you know would not do for me [...]. Finally he gives Clare a generous offer, with no apparent thought to his strained finances: [...] Whenever you like a little change you are welcome to come here and get bed and board for nothing and be at liberty to go and come as you choose provided you do nothing to make you unpleasant as a visitor.<sup>30</sup>

This attitude of genuine concern was further reinforced when Allen wrote to Taylor about Clare: 'Should he not remain well I hope his friends will send him here rather than elsewhere, as I should feel hurt after the interest I have felt and do feel for him.'<sup>31</sup> He would, as he says here, have been deeply hurt and probably angry when he learnt that Clare had been confined in the new charitable asylum in Northampton. Allen had invested a great deal of concern, time and energy on his poet-patient and it must all have seemed wasted in the end.

### **8.2.2 The Loss Of His Business**

At the end of 1840 Alfred Tennyson instructed his property at Grasby in Lincolnshire to be sold. He placed the proceeds of the sale and the money recently left to him by an aunt of Arthur Hallam, about three thousand pounds in all, at the disposal of Matthew Allen. A legal agreement, thought by some to be of a

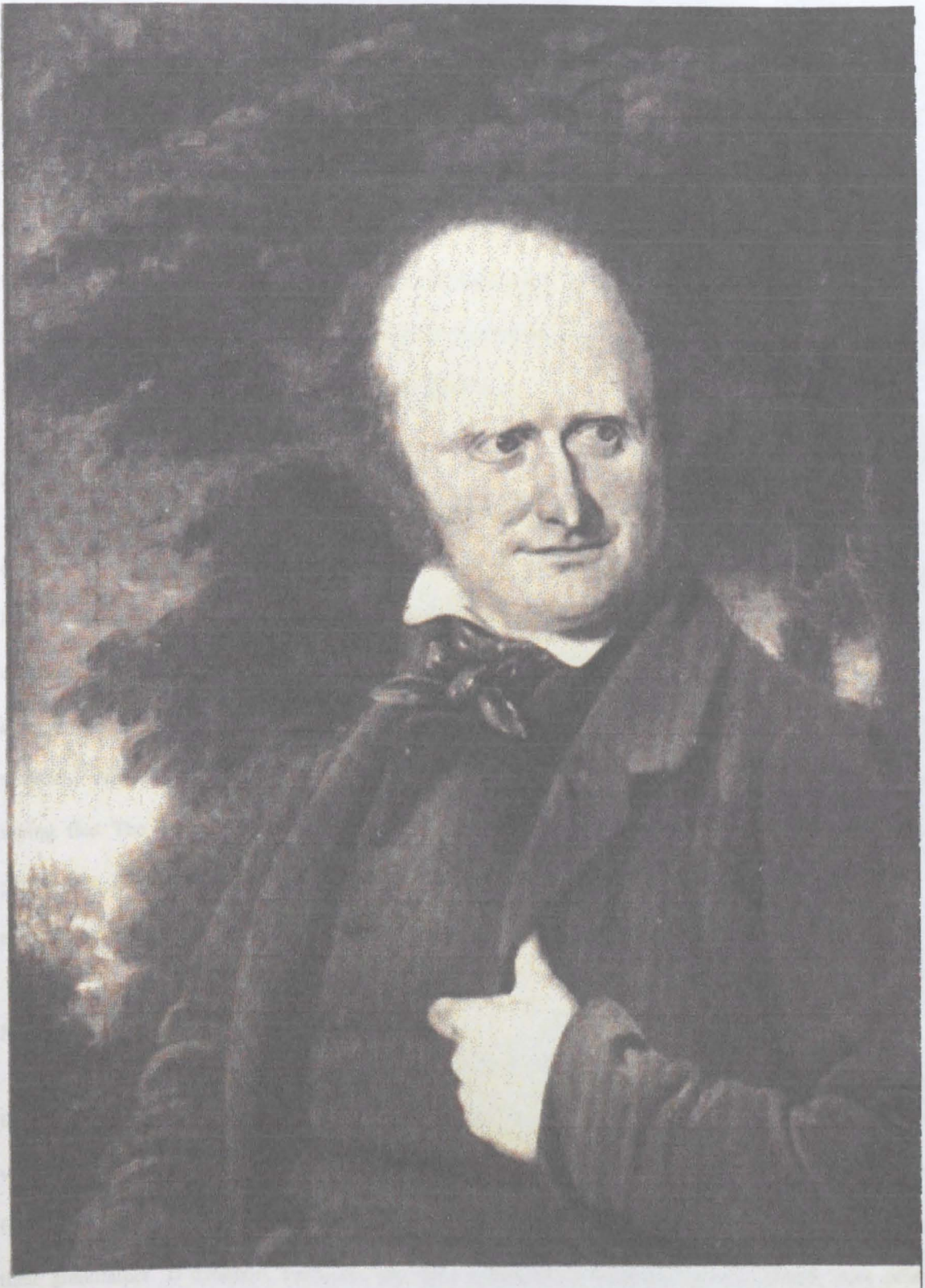


Figure 12

Portrait of John Clare, 1844, by Thomas Grimshaw - 3 years after leaving  
High Beech

very amateur production, dated 25 November 1840 was drawn up between them whereby Tennyson was to receive five percent per annum on the money lent to Allen, plus a further one hundred pounds per annum.<sup>32</sup> Allen bought the wood carving machine, or at least the idea of it, from a Mr H. Wood, about whom nothing is known, who along with Tennyson, became a director of the company. Allen was initially elated and optimistic about the prospects of the business and though Tennyson had misgivings along the way, his faith in Allen was not finally broken till September 1842. A warehouse and workshop were acquired in Henrietta Street in nearby Waltham Cross and men were employed to begin the production of *Pyroglyphs* — a name which Allen chose for the process.

### 8.2.2.1 Pyroglyphs

The word literally means sculptured designs made by fire. The process, run by steam power, decorated wooden objects which could be easily mass-produced and used in the homes of the middle and lower classes, in schools and in churches. The scheme had behind it a philanthropic motive of bringing culture and art into the lives of the less well off. Liberal Victorians, concerned with educating the lower classes were drawn to the idea. Lord Brougham is said to have called the process 'a new industrial miracle'.<sup>33</sup> Alfred's mother, writing to her sister Mrs Fitch, enthused over her son's new business venture saying that The Royal Society was soon to have a lecture about the process which produced the pyroglyphs. Beyond this no detail has been given of the process and after Allen's scheme collapsed it appears not to have been taken up as a business again.

### 8.2.2.2 Success in sight

Members of Alfred's family, his brother Charles, his mother and his sisters were so taken up with the idea that they ultimately invested money in the company up to a total of nine thousand pounds. Allen visited the Tennyson family at Boxley Hall in Kent on 14 August 1841.<sup>34</sup> For three months thereafter the four sisters tried to get their Uncle, Charles d'Eyncourt Tennyson, to release the money left to them by their grandfather. D'Eyncourt Tennyson had quite separately heard about Allen's scheme from other sources that summer, along with negative criticism as to its viability, and so was reluctant to concede to their request.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile Allen's need for money increased greatly. He found that he needed to purchase a patent on the process — possibly a French patent — but at a price far greater than anticipated — over three thousand pounds.<sup>36</sup> In October 1841 the agent he employed to procure it embezzled his money and Allen was obliged to pay the amount all over again. The strange similarity to the events surrounding his

purchase of the soda water factory in Leith in 1812 cannot but be noticed. In his urgent need of capital, Allen began to put pressure on the Tennyson sisters and on 5 November they wrote impertinently to their uncle again demanding the money, enclosing a letter from Dr Allen. 'What is it you object to?' They asked, 'If you have had scruples before this must remove them'.<sup>37</sup> Their brother Charles Tennyson had only recently written to their uncle on their behalf and said of Allen: 'He is both to us and to thousands of others known to be honourable and trustworthy'.<sup>38</sup>

On 6 November 1841, Matthew Allen wrote to Frederick Tennyson who had also been present during Allen's visit on 14 August and, impressed by the Doctor and his plans, had shown interest in purchasing a share in the business. Frederick had not yet produced the money and Allen, boiling over with impatience said: 'If you cannot put an end to this state of things I must'. There were others, he said, who were eager to invest. His Bankers and Solicitor had only the previous day forecast that in a year Frederick's share would be worth ten thousand pounds and in five years would be yielding that annually. Despite the slowness of the Tennyson family to respond to his urgent need, someone else had come to Allen's rescue. He told Fredrick: 'Another, however, who is intimately acquainted with all my private affairs has generously come forward to assist me without any reward, so that I will get through without making any sacrifice of a further share or even that of selling a share in this establishment, or even my coal mines, all of which you know I contemplated'.<sup>39</sup> Shortly after this the Tennyson money must have been forthcoming, because still in November, Allen wrote to Alfred again. His mood was ebullient, gone was the hectoring after financial help, gone the anxiety and tension, all was high optimism:

All is hope; fear is gone and I feel happy. If you knew the proportion of anxiety that I have gone through and the feeling of relief that overwhelms me and often makes my heart swell to bursting with gratitude and relieved only by tears scamping over my eyelids you would see the depth and sincerity of the heart of the man who calls himself your friend; and who trusts in God that he will be able to give the lie to all those who were suspicious, but far be it from me to boast [...]

He gives a picture of a business beginning to flourish and obviously believed, and apparently with good reason, that fortunes were about to be made:

Orders are flowing in from all the great ones [...] My friend Clissold has just ordered a screen, the Bishop of London's brother two more chairs and the Bishop of Chester has sent for two chairs, stalls etc. two screens — finials etc, etc — but it is impossible a tenth of these [...] they are going to lecture upon it at the Royal Institution. Also at the Architectural Society.

In the same letter there is a rather obscure reference which seems to indicate that Allen had thought again,

and decided in favour of allowing someone else to buy into the asylum itself. He wrote: 'I have just come from Farnham where I have concluded an agreement of co-partnership with a most excellent surgeon, in every way suitable — I got a good round sum — much more than I expected.'<sup>40</sup> Whoever entered into this partnership must have paid for a regular share in the asylum's income. This would have supplied Allen's need for a large amount of ready cash. The partner would have been useful at High Beech too as a stand-in for Allen and to take the load off his shoulders while he was taken up with the new business. There is no evidence, however, that this surgeon ever came to the asylum at that time; it seems that he was merely a sleeping partner involved with the profits alone. The Visitors' Book makes no reference to such a person, although it is just possible that he was one of the doctors who ran the asylum immediately after Allen's death, until Paterson Allen could step into his father's shoes. Maybe at that time Paterson bought back the partner's share of the asylum. Possibly this person got cold feet and withdrew from the partnership in the early stages, but nothing more is ever said about him.

With enough funds, but with more work than he could handle, problems immediately arose for Allen which delayed production of the *Pyroglyphs*. The workmen, disgruntled with their work conditions, downed tools and departed; more had to be found and trained in the process. Meanwhile the investors awaited their promised profits with impatience.

There is a document giving a summary of the stock in 'The Stock Room, Model Room, Press Room and in Jones's Shop'.<sup>41</sup> This stock consisted of various types of wood — Chestnut, Rosewood, Mahogany etc. cast iron dies and, 'Patent Carvings comprising Mouldings, Enrichments, Muniments, Panels Friezes, Chair Sets' and so on. Along with the fittings, carpets and furnishings in the office the total value comes to two thousand five hundred and thirty-five pounds. There is a short list of other expenses which included rent on two properties. Then comes the sad statement of: 'Goods sold and delivered'. They are only to the value of six hundred pounds. What had happened to the prospects of three months earlier and why was this inventory taken at that time? There appears to have been some sort of crisis of confidence in *Pyroglyphs*. Either the products were not forthcoming, or not satisfactory. Adverse rumours about Allen were continually circulating, but their source is not clear.<sup>42</sup> It was also at this date that the name of the company was changed to *The Patent Decorative Carving and Sculpture Company*.<sup>43</sup> Whatever the case, the optimistic outlook of only three months previously had changed.

News finally reached Tennyson, from an unknown but, according to him, trustworthy source, of the real state of affairs in July 1842. The last he had heard from Allen was a hasty note, with an enclosure,

on 9 May 1842 saying: 'Get this melted into money immediately. Have faith and all things will be more than well'.<sup>44</sup> The Tennysons were at first reluctant to believe that all was lost. Allen, however, did not answer Alfred's letters, so his sister Mary wrote to Elizabeth Allen, describing her brother's anxieties — 'The anxiety it creates amongst the house circle is painful. Alfred fidgets himself to death'.<sup>45</sup>

### 8.2.3 The Loss Of A Frindship

It was in July 1842 that Alfred Tennyson lost faith in Matthew Allen. In a long letter which he wrote to Allen, Tennyson reveals that he had had feelings of real friendship for the Doctor, despite the doubts others had expressed about him. He had believed him to be morally and spiritually above the common run of humanity. He begged Allen to prove to him that this was indeed the case. Allen's response was silence and it is probable that Tennyson never heard from him again. Genuine friendship with the soon-to-be Poet Laureate; to have been considered as one of his intimates, would have preserved Allen's reputation into posterity.

Allen must have realised the value of what he had lost, and cringed at Tennyson's opinion of him. This termination of a valuable friendship must have added painfully to the many losses that were stripping Allen of all he had at that time. Tennyson had had reported to him by persons — 'whose veracity I had no need to question' — that Allen had said in their presence that Tennyson had driven a hard bargain with him and if the speculation succeeded Tennyson could have no claims upon him. The poet continues in his letter to Allen:

In the earlier days of our acquaintance if anything of this nature had been reported to me I should have rejected this at once as some monstrous perversion. At present I still hope it is a misrepresentation and that you will be able to explain it away. The first part of the sentence is sheer absurdity the last involves dishonour and I am very unwilling to think ill of a man whom I have regarded with affection and admiration for the valuable qualities of his head and his heart and what seemed to me his clear religious feeling. My faith in you has been strong — most strong. The stronger it has been the deeper and more poignant must be my distaste and loathing, if I find you one of the herd, a mere common place man, ready like all worldlings, after a thousand promises at the first glimpse of prosperity, to kick down the ladder by which he mounted.<sup>46</sup>

Here we have Tennyson's honest opinion of Allen as a man — the foundation of what could have been a strong, lasting relationship. We also have an accusation that Allen was a cheat. Allen, always quick to justify himself in the past, apparently never answered Alfred who wished to salvage their friendship. Matthew's silence has to be taken as an admission that he *had* expressed his feelings as had been reported to Tennyson.

In that same letter to Matthew in July, Alfred had written: 'I never said a word of my being willing to give up my share. But I had always from the first objected to women being involved in this sort of speculation.'<sup>47</sup> Allen's response was to find a buyer for the shares belonging to the Tennyson women and he offered to buy out Charles and even Alfred, but simultaneously he was persuading Septimus, still in the asylum at High Beech, to invest one thousand pounds of his own. In October 1842, failing any reply from Matthew, Alfred wrote to Elizabeth Allen furiously demanding that she prevent her husband from involving any more of his family in his scheme. On a trip to Ireland at the end of 1842 Tennyson had written to Edward Fitzgerald that he saw ruin in the distance.<sup>48</sup>

All communication between the Allen and the Tennyson families had ceased by the beginning of 1843. It was at this time that Fredrick Tennyson, known for his hot temper, came back from Italy and confronted Allen about the family finances. He had been advised by friends not to see Allen face-to-face, but he did, and Allen complained of being assaulted. What took place is unknown but no doubt Fredrick gave the Doctor what he thought were his just deserts, also making sure that Septimus left the asylum for good. All during 1843, a year in which we have few details about Allen's activities, he struggled to redeem his business, but to no avail. On 2 December of that year he was officially declared a bankrupt and the business was liquidated.<sup>49</sup>

Nowhere are the facts concerning Allen's financial situation described. Amongst the notebooks used by Dr William Beattie in writing the life of the poet Thomas Campbell there is a note dated 5 March 1844: 'As to Dr Allen's bankruptcy, Mr Pennel wrote to Mr Campbell saying that Dr Allen had satisfied the bankruptcy Court and would settle his own accounts as formerly.'<sup>50</sup> He had remained a bankrupt for only three months. He had said in a letter to Frederick that 'every stick and stave which he possessed had been sold to repay Alfred.'<sup>51</sup> The coal mines Allen mentioned in an earlier letter must, presumably, have been sold under the terms of liquidation.

The results of the whole sad affair were not as clear as it may seem. Alfred Tennyson made loud complaint about his troubles and proclaimed himself, 'a penniless beggar and deeply in debt besides'.<sup>52</sup> However, R. B. Martin in his biography of Tennyson assures us that the poet had a certain and continuing income of at least six hundred pounds a year from other investments and property. He had a volume of poems published in 1842 — his first for ten years, and it was, despite his pessimistic forebodings, a success. He could also afford to travel about. Later that same year he went to Ireland and the following year entered an expensive Water Cure in Cheltenham. Howl as Alfred did, about his misfortune and Allen's



incompetence, there were others a lot worse off. There was the anonymous friend who gave Allen capital with no strings attached when the Tennysons were still trying to get their money together, there were others who lost their investments as well, but there is no record of a single public complaint, while the Tennyson family take up pages of their own history vilifying Allen and commiserating with Alfred.

On the other hand, although Allen complained to Fredrick: 'I ail! I suffer! And I die!'<sup>53</sup> he had the continuing income from his private patients and the sale of the mines to fall back on. His life style no doubt had to suffer changes and his financial security was wiped out, but life at the asylum continued uninterruptedly. This meant, however, he was even further away from being able to retire from looking after lunatics.

Losing the friendship of Tennyson was regrettable but along with it he incurred the scorn and wrath of the Tennyson family for generations to come. Alfred himself refused to speak ill of Allen. On receiving news of his sudden death Alfred wrote: 'No gladness crossed my heart but sorrow and pity. That is not theatrical but the truth.'<sup>54</sup> This was written to his close friend, Edward Fitzgerald who viewed Allen in a far less tolerant light and had from the beginning thought Allen 'Madder than his own patients'.<sup>55</sup> His remarks and gossip contributed to the scandalous reputation that continues to be attached to Allen's name up to the present day. Two letters from Fitzgerald to Fredrick Tennyson illustrate his dislike of Allen. After Fredrick visited Allen at the asylum at the beginning of 1843, Fitzgerald wrote: 'I was sorry to hear you went to High Beech. Depend upon it the world is right about Dr Allen: He is not a man to be trusted.'<sup>56</sup> In September of 1843 he wrote again to Fredrick:

I am glad to hear so hopeful an account of your affairs with that Old Serpent. Edgworth<sup>7</sup> asked me much about him and is about to remove his brother from the asylum. Allen had stuffed his ears with *his* whole version of the woodcarving etc. and all his dealings with you and your family — your assaults on him etc. I told Edgworth that whatever his brother's opinion might be, that brother being yet under old Allen's enchantment, I could swear that Allen was a damned Scoundrel on the best authority. So here I think the old witch will lose a patient. Mrs Allen had been quite as loquacious on the subject as the Doctor.

Scoundrel, witch, and the devil himself — such epithets did not die an easy death. Allen's reputation was not helped when, years later, as Poet Laureate, Tennyson recalled his affair with the Doctor remembering how it felt to be taken in and deceived. His poem *Sea Dreams* is the tale of a struggling clerk, holidaying at the seaside with his wife and child. He meets an obsequious property dealer who

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<sup>7</sup> \*The name Edgworth does not appear in the asylum records at that time, nor at any other.



persuades him to invest his meagre savings in a bogus Peruvian gold mine. In his caricature of Allen he describes him thus:

I met him suddenly in the street and ask'd "Show me the books!"  
 He dodged me with a long and loose account.  
 "The books, the books!" but he, he could not wait,  
 Bound on a matter he of life and death:  
 When the great Books (see Daniel seven and ten)  
 Were open'd, I should find he meant me well;  
 And then began to bloat himself and ooze  
 All over with the fat affectionate smile  
 That makes the widow lean. "My dearest friend,  
 Have faith, have faith! We live by faith," said he  
 All things work together for the good  
 Of those" — it makes me sick to quote him — last  
 Gript my hand hard, and with God-bless-you went,  
 I stood like one that had received a blow;  
 I found a hard friend in his loose accounts,  
 A loose one in the hard grip of his hand,  
 A curse in his God-bless-you: then my eyes  
 Pursued him down the street and far away,  
 Amongst the honest shoulders of the crowd,  
 Read rascal in the motions of his back,  
 And scoundrel in the supple-sliding knee.<sup>57</sup>

Any affectionate memory of friendship for Allen seemed to be gone and Tennyson remembered their acquaintance only with bitterness and distaste.

#### 8.2.4 A Polish Episode

All the while, life in the asylum continued as before. Despite efforts to discredit Allen, the patient numbers remained steady. On 31 December 1842, there were forty-two patients according to the official Visitors' inspection and on 30 December 1843 the total was forty-one.

Amongst the patients listed for 1843 is Benoit Kolesinski who was admitted to High Beech Asylum on 18 August. Eleven years prior to this the poet Thomas Campbell and other concerned literary men had established *The Association of the Friends of Poland*. Its purpose was to befriend refugees from the Polish uprising against their Russian, Prussian and Austrian oppressors, who had partitioned Poland between them, thirty-five years earlier. Many Poles of literary repute had fled to London and even more to Paris. Now the council of *The Association of Friends of Poland* in London had received an application from Mr Kolesinski for financial help. He had been an officer in the Polish army and had fled to Paris ten years ago where he had lived until recently when he had come to England. Under these circumstances the Council would not normally have given financial aid but had waved their rules when they found the man was suffering from insanity. Dr Allen had been asked to accept him as a patient and agreed to do so at a

charge, 'Which to Dr Allen is probably not remunerative though it is equal to the highest allowance ever made by the Association'.<sup>58</sup>

On 14 October when Mr Kolesinski had been in the asylum nearly two months, an inspection by the Official Visitors took place. Dr Badeley had some conversation with Kolesinski and was impressed by his seemingly sane and reasonable speech and demeanour. Badeley then wrote to the Honourary Secretary of the Association and requested some details of the Polish man's history. The secretary, William Birkbeck, a barrister at law, replied describing how some of his council members, Lord Dudley Stuart, Charles Chorrison, Brales and Fredrick Cortazzi and himself, had reached their decision about Kolesinski's madness. When asked what had made him leave France, where he was receiving a pension from the government, Kolesinski had replied that: 'He had been driven from France by the persecution of the Jesuits, on account of his religious opinions: that they had assembled crowds of people before the door of the house where he resided and had attempted to assassinate him.' On mention of the French Royal Family, Kolesinski said: 'They had been very kind to him; that the Duke of Orleans was not really dead, that he had himself been with the Duke in his cab after the time that he had been reported killed; that he had found the Duke of Nemours in his bed etc'. These replies had been taken by the Council as clear evidence of his insanity. Birkbeck expressed the wish that Mr Kolesinski should be released if considered well as his keep was expensive but that: 'He should be led to converse on the subjects above alluded to. If his views on these matters appear to be rational there can be little doubt that he is really convalescent.'<sup>59</sup>

It is not clear what then happened. On 24 October Dr Badeley still found Kolesinski: 'labouring under certain delusions', but was anxious that his case be brought to the attention of the Commissioners in Lunacy. He was discharged from the asylum on 15 November apparently against the will of Dr Allen. This is the only case on record at High Beech Asylum where the Visitors overruled the Superintendent's judgment of a patient's condition. This must have been annoying to Allen, and when discharging Kolesinski he left a warning note of his own in the Visitors' Book: 'He will become a dangerous if not incurable case'.<sup>60</sup> This was not just to mark his annoyance but because Allen genuinely believed what he wrote. Some years earlier he had written the same about just such a case:

The most dangerous cases, can nevertheless, in the incipient stages of the disease [...] after being placed under moral restraint and medical care, exert their remaining power of self-control over their delusions [...] so as to appear for some considerable time perfectly sane. Indeed [...] where the insane person preserves his individuality of character and his alarming state is chiefly indicated by his having his prominent peculiarities in the natural constitution of his mind in a highly exaggerated and caricatured state (which is always a most unfavourable prognostic [...]) the incipient stage assumes this delusive appearance.<sup>61</sup>

Unfortunately the ultimate fate of Benoit Kolesinski is unknown and therefore also the accuracy or otherwise of Allen's prognostications. This ignoring of his professional advice could only have added to Allen's sense of the world turning against him, as it came just days before he was, for the second time in his life, declared a bankrupt.

## **8.2.5 Loss Of His Professional Reputation**

Whatever Allen's reputation elsewhere it had always remained exemplary with the Commissioners in Lunacy. No fault had been found with his professional conduct or in the condition of his patients or asylum. In 1844 that changed. When the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy presented their report to Parliament for that year, Allen came under criticism for two matters:

### **8.2.5.1 Matters of Censure**

In 1842 an ex-patient, Mr Robert Selby, a wine merchant from Surrey, had written to the Commissioners to complain about Dr Allen. Selby had been a patient at High Beech Asylum from January 1840 to July 1841. He claimed that he had been in the habit while in the asylum of placing himself under personal restraint when he felt the symptoms of his illness come strongly upon him. (Presumably he strapped himself into a chair, or something similar.) He claimed that while he was under this form of restraint, he had received visitors who wanted him to sign a deed, ceding his property to trustees; also that Allen released him from restraint and instructed him to sign the deed. When questioned by the Visitors in Lunacy on their next inspection Allen denied that Selby had been under restraint at all, saying he had been in a perfectly calm and reasonable frame of mind. Allen admitted to having several times allowed patients to sign such papers, 'but before doing so he always satisfied himself that the act was proper'.<sup>62</sup> Allen, however, had attempted to rectify the matter by supplying an affidavit for Chancery proceedings, stating Selby had been certified insane when the deed was executed. This was a grave error of judgment on Allen's part and is now seen as such, as it is known that unscrupulous relatives did, in a number of instances, use this method to gain control of relative's property. Allen did not have the benefit of hindsight and suffered from more than his share of naïvety.

In September 1842 the Visitors had found a man residing at High Beech as a patient but without certificates signed by medical doctors confirming his insanity. There is no reference to this in The Visitors' Book, and on first reading it could be assumed that this person was Septimus Tennyson. However, they go on to establish that the person was known to have been a previously certified patient in another asylum

who was unfit to be free. Allen admitted to receiving low spirited or despondent persons as boarders on several occasions.<sup>63</sup>

The Judgement of the Commissioners was severe: It was questionable, they said, whether a doctor who admits patients without medical certification, or who allows certified patients to sign legal deeds while at his asylum, whether in a reasonable frame of mind or not, ought to be entrusted with a license. They did not, however, go so far as to remove Allen's.

### 8.2.5.2 Voluntary Patients

There is no doubt that Allen's ideal system of cure was based on patients placing themselves, at their own volition, under his care. He saw this as the way ahead in the treatment of insanity. If madness could be diagnosed and treated in its incipient stage it could be quickly cured or prevented. Chronic insanity, on the other hand, was largely incurable. He made his position on this matter quite clear in his book: 'In some cases I have known the convalescence of some patients confirmed [...] by discharging them as patients, and inviting them to remain and consider themselves as voluntary visitors [...] a stimulus to others to exert their self control.'<sup>64</sup>

In having voluntary patients under his roof Allen was not actually breaking the law — which did not, until the major legislation of the following year, 1845, specifically forbid the practice of receiving voluntary patients. The illegal aspect in Allen's case was receiving them without certificates. Nevertheless the Visitors were reasonable in their objection for, as the law (of 1828) stood at that time, to forbid voluntary patients was the only way to prevent the unlawful detention of the sane and the maltreatment of the insane. Certification was also the only way of maintaining official statistics on the numbers of insane within asylums. Without doubt, had Allen lived to witness, what he would have regarded as a very retrograde step in lunacy legislation, he would have publicly protested. His very aim was to influence the law in the reverse direction:

It is of the utmost importance that the legislature should have it completely demonstrated to them that there is a condition of the insane never contemplated by any legislator; the judicious management of which, is of the greatest consequence to them. Instead of the mental malady being allowed to proceed until the sufferer is induced into these retreats by force, its first approaches will be yielded to as soon as recognised, and the unhappy individual, whilst still in possession of his reason will voluntarily [...] enter some refuge for mental distress.<sup>65</sup>

It is also doubtful whether, with his deep convictions on the subject and his years of experience with voluntary patients, Allen would have kept within the law on this matter. Allen would have been

increasingly at odds with the whole practice and culture of the care of the insane. He was years ahead of his time. Legislation in 1862 eventually allowed licensed-house proprietors to admit private patients as voluntary boarders. It was not until the Mental Treatment Act of 1930 that voluntary patients became acceptable as residents in public institutions.

The Visitors to all asylums submitted their reports to the Lunacy Commissioners who were led at this time, and for many years, by the Hon. Anthony Ashley Cooper, later Lord Shaftesbury, who presented an annual report to the House of Commons. In his report in 1844 he highlighted such matters as uncertificated patients. He mentioned Allen by name as an offender who risked losing his licence over this specific offence. To be personally censured in Parliament must have been the final blow to Allen. After his long years of work for the insane, his reputation was now publicly in tatters. It is hard to imagine the depth of his distress when this came on top of all his other troubles.

### **8.2.6 The Loss Of Thom Campbell**

Thom Campbell was one of a small core of patients who had been with Allen from the early days of the asylum. He, along with the three who had originally come with Allen from the York Asylum, William Montagu and a few others, formed the 'Family' at Fair Mead House who relied on Allen for their existence. He no doubt counted on their being there permanently. Given his inevitable state of depression in 1844 he would have felt that at least *they* cared about and appreciated him, if few others did. Thom, however, was to let him down badly.

In June 1844 the poet Thomas Campbell died, leaving his son's financial affairs, including a legacy from his namesake, the eminent engineer, Thomas Telford, in the hands of two executors, Dr William Beattie and Mr W. Moxon. These executors decided to commission the Chancery Court of lunacy for an inquiry to confirm Thom's insanity and to establish what money was necessary to maintain his regular care and how much he should be allowed to have for regular personal use.

The Inquiry was held at the White Hart Inn at Waltham Cross on 23 September 1844.<sup>66</sup> After fifteen years at High Beech, where he was allowed to wander at will, with only his word of parole to bind him, Thom had made a lot of friends in the neighbourhood. The temporary courtroom was crowded with interested spectators, many of whom knew Thom personally. *The Times* described him as a short man of five foot five inches tall, dark complexioned, with a stout but robust, muscular frame and with a pleasant good-humoured expression. He was forty years old and showed no signs whatever of a disordered

intellect.

Moxon spoke for the trustees and then Allen had his say as to Thom's mental state. He considered him a mild case and said that all Thom needed was a little moral control. He had been allowed to wander freely since first residing at the asylum and it was estimated that he had walked eighty thousand miles in all. Most days he walked from thirty to forty miles and as a consequence was very fit and strong. He was inclined to drink too much and his behaviour was often very eccentric. He sometimes fancied that other inmates disliked him and was quarrelsome as a result. Many fabrics irritated him and his trousers, especially made for him, were always of a corduroy material that suited him. Thom was shrewd with an intense interest in his surroundings, which could manifest itself in bizarre ways. Only three months previously he had watched the slaughter of animals, butchered regularly on the asylum premises for meat for staff and patients and had insisted on eating some of the warm brains from the freshly slain ox. Though perfectly harmless he laboured under certain delusions and in Dr Allen's opinion was definitely of unsound mind.

To the astonishment of all who were closest to Thom, fourteen out of the sixteen jury declared him sane and he was immediately set free to go where he liked. According to the newspaper report Thom, having anticipated this result, had packed his belongings and had brought them with him to the hearing. He departed without further ado to the house of his friend Capt. Sotheby in Woodford. It is possible that Beattie had intended to remove Thom from Allen's asylum anyway. Thom had been sent to a Mrs Johnston of 16 Dover Street before the hearing and it seems to have been Dr Beattie's intention that he should have returned there afterwards.<sup>67</sup> But Thom was off — his own man again after fifteen years. There seem to have been some allegations made by Thom, about which Cyrus Redding made an obscure remark: 'I have gone more at length into this painful incident [...] than I should have done, but for events occurring since the poet's decease, among utter strangers of all relative to the case.'<sup>68</sup> (That is Thom's case). However, evidence as to where he went and what he ultimately did with his life, appears to be lost.

The one most amazed of all by the court's verdict must have been Matthew Allen. To see Thom, whose life he had controlled for so long, rushing off, must have felt like suddenly losing a member of his own family. Not to be able to do anything about it must have left him with a sense of helplessness and loss of control, a feeling with which he had become all too familiar over the last four years. Added to this would have been a deep aggrievement that the jury, who had consisted of ordinary working-class men from the neighbourhood, had ignored his professional judgement and proclaimed Thom sane. All respect

for him had gone, from Parliament, the Lunacy Commissioners, his social compeers, his neighbours and now even from his own patients.

### 8.2.7 Death

There is no way of knowing what those last months of 1844 were like for Matthew Allen — whether or not he determined to pick up the pieces and persevere with his profession, or whether recent events sent him into a spiral of despair, from which he more than ever wished desperately to escape. Whether he saw the new year as a challenge or faced it with dread, stress combined with an unhealthy heart brought the escape he sought, through his death, which occurred very suddenly on 1 January 1845.

Allen's will was simple and devoid of detail. He left all that he had to his wife and requested her to continue to care for his first family, all of whom were adults by this time. This seems to indicate that the responsibility of dividing up any personal property or money was left entirely in her hands. When the initial shock was over and his widow once again took up the reins of her life she decided to continue the work of the asylum. Two doctors were employed to care for the patients' medical needs, to assess them on arrival and to discharge them when cured. Fair Mead, in its very pleasant surroundings was Elizabeth's home, and that of her growing children, and it was reasonable for her to desire to remain there. The asylum too had probably been promised to Paterson, their eldest son, for his future income and field of work, on completion of his Surgeon's apprenticeship, which he had just commenced.

Elizabeth Allen had to apply to the Court of Quarter Sessions for a new license to own and run a private asylum in her own name. This was granted for Leopard's Hill Lodge and Springfield House.<sup>69</sup> Fair Mead House and Cottage were reoccupied as the family home only. This resulted in a reduction in the number of patients. The official lunacy figures for 1847 show that there were thirty-four patients in total at the asylum, with one on medical treatment and two under restraint. By 1850, when at twenty-one, having gained his MRCS, Paterson Allen became superintendent and sole medical officer the numbers were down to thirty-two. They declined gradually — in 1852 there were twenty-four, though the following year they were up to twenty-seven.<sup>70</sup>

Information on the Allen family and the asylum becomes less and less throughout the 1850s. The asylum closed in 1859, but what arrangements were made for the dependent, long-term patients is unknown. By the time of the census in 1861 all traces of the asylum and family were gone and the buildings on the property were not included in the enumeration, perhaps indicating that they were

unoccupied or demolished.

Allen's death was timely in an historical sense. With the passing of new legislation on lunacy in 1845 a new era began — one into which he would not easily have fitted. The somaticist view of insanity, that physical causes were at its root, became dominant and advocates of moral or psychological causation of insanity decreased in number and their views were treated with scepticism. The result was that achievement of *cures* in asylums, such as Allen and his contemporaries regularly claimed, almost disappeared altogether during the last half of the century. Investigation into psycho-neurological diseases such as epilepsy and idiocy improved and separate hospital treatment for such patients developed. There were other indications of progress such as the clearer identification of certain mental diseases like Manic-Depression and Dementia Praecox (Schizophrenia). Asylum population, however, increased steadily throughout the century and institutions became crowded with incurables for whom no medical treatment could be found. Insanity was viewed in terms of an epidemic and considered by some, such as Benedict Morel in France and Henry Maudsley in Britain, as predominantly hereditary. The insane were treated more often than not as social deviants who needed management and useful occupation and were best kept in isolation from the sane, in large asylums or communities.<sup>71</sup> Hope of physical cure greatly diminished and psychological approaches languished, seen as failed ideas of the past. It was not until the 1890s that Charcot, Janet, Freud, Jung and others brought any new light to the science and experimented with radical new approaches to insanity. The fruitful and progressive years from 1820 to 1845 became an era largely overlooked and never perhaps rated highly enough in the history of psychiatry. It was in these years that Allen was a leader in his field.



## CONCLUSION

This thesis contains a chronological account of Dr Matthew Allen's life and demonstrates what manner of a man he was, and the important factors, for example his unconventional upbringing, that influenced his life and developed his eccentric personality. Recounting his life story has required exploration into the concepts and values held by Allen's generation and in what measure he conformed to these. The thesis is, however, biographically flawed, as the information it is based on is limited and fragmentary; in some places information is missing altogether, and in others it is biased and subjective.

Allen and his contemporaries displayed vast ignorance of disease and the human body, but matched this with their incessant search for knowledge in these areas. We see the progress that was made during the end of the eighteenth-century and the first few decades of the nineteenth-century, particularly in the treatment of insanity. Amongst his compeers Allen was no genius, but he was gifted in the practise of his profession, finding and employing the best ways to treat insanity and its victims. Emphasis has been placed in this thesis on individual patients of Dr Allen and their case histories and on eyewitness reports of other contemporary asylums and how they appeared, especially in comparison with Allen's own asylum at High Beech, their patient numbers and percentage cures and the fees which they charged. Some of this material is completely new within the history of medicine and has been found within texts totally unrelated to the field of medicine or psychiatry, for example Thomas Campbell's visit to Laverstock House and John Griscom's descriptions of the York and Glasgow asylums. The recounting of Allen's relationship with Alfred Tennyson and his family has been scattered throughout literary and biographical narratives concerning the poet. Here, it is brought together in a comprehensive assessment. Allen's connection with John Clare has been treated in the same way. Both reveal Allen's weakness with money and his panic when dealing with large sums; both show his human frailties and failures which brought him into deep despair, and the weaknesses and strengths of his treatment of others, but also his genuine compassion and desire to help those in his care.

From the age of thirty-six to sixty-one years, that is, for the last twenty-five years of his life, Matthew Allen lived and worked amongst the insane. These were the exact years — 1820 to 1845 — which formed a unique chapter in the history of psychiatry in Britain. This period fell between the old regime, when the mad were generally considered nearer to animals than humans, and treated that way, and the era of non-restraint when lunatics were given relative freedom within a managed environment. During

this short window of time in which Allen practised, the treatment of the mentally deranged was probably the most optimistic it has ever been. Those who cared for them dared to talk about achieving *cures* through attention to individual needs and the practice and development of moral or psychological treatment. Although Allen himself was, at times, apparently mentally and emotionally unstable it resulted in his having a greater understanding and sympathy with his patients and seeking in his own background for clues to the origins of their problems. These he often found in family relationships and childhood experiences. He believed that the resulting extreme or eccentric behaviour caused by fear, over-indulgence or neglect could be counterbalanced by compassion, gentleness and regimes especially formulated for individual needs, within a firmly structured environment where self-discipline and self-development were encouraged. Community life within the asylum prepared patients for their return to ordinary society.

He sought always, not only to improve methods of treatment, but to research into the causes of mental illness and the factors which might have affected it, such as atmospherics and the weather, and the lack of, or misguided, early education. He came to a firm belief that insanity had predominantly moral causes but needed treatment from medically trained alienists because there were physical results to these moral causes. He believed that many of his medical colleagues mistook these results for symptoms of purely physical origins to insanity.

Allen felt that if the new approach of non-restraint required strict vigilance over a mass of patients and lack of individual contact with them, then it had no value. Experience had taught him that a measure of restraint and a great deal of authority in the hands of a wise and caring alienist achieved good results. Events in the history of asylumdom: — the practice of total non-restraint from 1840; the mounting number of chronic insane and falling cure rates in the huge asylums developed from 1845; while private asylums also became overcrowded and were forced to abandon individual treatment, — turned public and professional focus towards the social policies concerned with the insane. These included the economics of care — the provision of intensive patient labour, making asylums self-sufficient — and the desirability of removing the insane from public view into their own communities as the stigma of insanity increased. New mental ailments were categorised during the latter half of the century and confidence centred on medical treatment rather than psychological approaches. This caused the work of earlier alienists to be underrated, or seen as useless and out of date.

Allen himself was not unaware of the need for a new social policy for dealing with the insane. He constantly sought for acceptance of mental illness in society at large by encouraging contact between the

public and insane persons. His asylum was not shut away behind high walls and was always open to visitors. He was against certification of the insane as it resulted in a stigma, which prevented persons coming forward for early treatment. He saw voluntary patients, the dispelling of public ignorance about insanity and the acceptance of lunatics in society as the way forward in treating the mentally ill. What finally took place was the establishment of policies directly opposed to Allen's ideals. The mad were shut away from public view, certification remained a legal requirement and the admission of voluntary patients was legislated against in the very year that Allen died. He and his work eventually dropped into obscurity.

Allen's attempts to describe his treatment, explain his conclusions and suggest new approaches through publication of books and articles were largely a failure. What he wrote was badly expressed and difficult to follow and often misunderstood, as it still is today. He was inclined to be very subjective in his conclusions and, as Carlyle expressed it: 'Given to building hypotheses'. His enthusiasm for phrenology, his teaching on the subject and his use of it in his medical practice, was effective in increasing the informed use of the technique by other practitioners. He made a definite contribution to its inclusion in the culture of the time. Such gentle persuasive treatment was a positive replacement to the practises of the old regime. Phrenology's best legacy — the focus on individual personality and its development, both in education and in the treatment of the insane — was put to full use by Allen. Nonetheless, phrenology's limited usefulness and its fundamental unsoundness, as concluded in chapter four, does, diminish the importance of his contribution, to what proved to be a subject of only passing scientific interest.

Despite his eccentricities Allen appears generally to have been an attractive and pleasant personality and to have got on well with most of his colleagues and fellow alienists. He was, however, inclined more and more to criticise them and thus court criticism of himself that he found hard to tolerate. He knew best the methods of older men such as Tuke (1784-1857), Ellis (1780-1839) and Burrows (1771-1846), who were of similar age to himself, and was wary of the up-and-coming generation who were inclined to undervalue past achievements and sweep them aside in search of newer modern methods. He became a victim of the very attitude with which he had treated his own brother, Oswald.

Perhaps one of Allen's main failings was that he neglected to train younger men in his own system and ideology. He left few behind him who would fight for the maintenance of his tried and tested principles. He was not prepared to discount what he had learnt over many years, for example the use of rewards and punishments combined with encouragement to self-discipline and the mutual trust involved with parole. These he perceived to be basic principles of treatment. To him regular individual patient-to-

alienist encounters in moderately sized asylums were the key to achieving cures. This system of dealing with the insane he saw as synonymous with the nurture of children. He believed in these methods because he had achieved a measure of cure through them and believed that they pointed to the way in which treatment should develop.

Ultimately Matthew Allen's own psychological problems, were his undoing. His subsequent doubtful reputation drew attention to his personal failings, raised questions about his integrity and genuine abilities. The result has been a charge of 'physician heal thyself'. The good work he did went largely unnoticed and the things he stood for were dismissed along with his personal reputation. He was responsible for the failure of his own cause. This thesis attempts to give both the man and his methods a fair appraisal. Lifting the former from obscurity it is intended that the latter be freshly reconsidered as well.

## REFERENCE NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

1 Dr Margaret Barnet was the first person to write about Matthew Allen outside of his connection with Clare and Tennyson. She based her article on the five hundred-page manuscript 'Oswald Allen's Memoirs' kept in the York Reference Library. See M. Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD (Aberdeen), 1783-1845', Medical History, 9 (1965), pp.16-26.

2 R. B. Martin, Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart (London: Faber, 1983), p.252. Unfortunately Martin does not give a source for this anecdote.

3 Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle, 24 vols eds. C. R. Sanders and K. Fielding (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1970), XI, p.112.

4 For the complete correspondence of Allen and Carlyle at this time see Sanders and Fielding, I (1811-1821), pp.252,271,277-278,310.

5 Martin, Tennyson, p.252.

6 See the letter of William Aldis Wright (of Trinity College, Cambridge) to Hallam Tennyson dated 3 December 1893. Tennyson Research Centre, Lincoln.

7 See the list of 29 character affidavits in M. Allen, Allen Versus Dutton (London: G.Swire, 1833), pp.8-103 (One of the very few extant copies of this book, apart from that in the Tennyson Research Centre, is bound with Allen's Essay on the Classification of the Insane (London, John Taylor, 1837) in the Library of The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London).

8 York Reference Library, Oswald Allen's Memoirs, 9Y20/12631, p.286.

9 1. Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD' p.19.

2. R. Cooter, Phrenology in the British Isles: An Annotated and Historical Biobibliography and Index (New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1989), p.4 and The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth Century Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.152.

3. R Cooter, 'Phrenology and British Alienists', Medical History, 20 (1976), p.98, n76.

10 T. Carlyle, Reminiscences, ed. C. E. Norton, 2 vols (London, 1887), II, p.126.

11 C. Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1949), p.186.

### CHAPTER I

1 Jane Welsh Carlyle: A New Collection of her Letters, ed. T. Bliss (London: Gollancz, 1949), p.38.

2 Copies of extracts from the wills of James and Edward Allen, held at Newark-on-Trent by Mr O. Allen.

3 J. F. Riley, The Hammer and the Anvil: A Background to Michael Faraday (Clapham, Yorks: Dalesman Publishing, 1954), p.12.

4 This is the only reference to James Allen's desire to study medicine, his failure to accomplish which probably prompted him to send his son to York to become an apothecary. The reference is made in an article by 'Adolescens' of Dublin in the Evangelical Magazine, 1814. The author must have had access to a source unknown to anyone else.

5 British Library, Religious and Ecclesiastical Tracts 1772-1834, Hailstone Yorkshire Collection: Historical Sketches of the Rise of Scots Old Independent and Inghamite Churches with the

Correspondence which Led to their Union (Colne, Lancs, 1814), p.xvi. 10347 e 4

6 R. W. Thompson, Benjamin Ingham: Yorkshire Evangelist (Kendal, Cum.: Privately published, 1958), p.80.

7 'Adolescens' of Dublin, The Evangelical Magazine, 1814, p.308.

8 Thompson, Benjamin Ingham, p.21.

9 Hervey's book takes the form of a discussion between Aspasia, a pagan Greek courtesan, and Theron, a Greek who had been converted to Christianity.

10 Riley, The Hammer and the Anvil, p.37.

11 Historical Sketches, p.xx.

12 It has always been known that a breach took place between James Allen and the Sandemanians and that he was excluded from their fellowship for the rest of his life. J. Riley comes closest to setting out what happened in The Hammer and the Anvil. Even Oswald's Oswald Allen's Memoirs take certain knowledge for granted so that the reader is left without the vital links to understanding what really happened. Recently, amongst papers held by G. Sandeman in Edinburgh a notebook was found which contained transcriptions from 'The Memoirs of James Allen'. These give a description of events which for the first time clarify exactly what took place and how James Allen came to be excluded from the Sandemanians. Allen left his Memoirs to his son Oswald and requested that he destroy them. Oswald quoted from them in his own Oswald Allen's Memoirs. It was thought that he then destroyed them. However the recently found transcriptions were made long after Oswald's death.

13 York Reference Library, Oswald Allen's Memoirs, 9Y20/12631, p.120.

14 They maintained that faith was simply equal to intellectual consent. No individual could therefore claim salvation through the merits of personal belief. This was essentially an error of Hyper-Calvinism. L Tyerman, in The Oxford Methodists: Memoirs of the Reverend Messrs Clayton, Ingham, Gambold, Hervey, and Broughton, with Biographical Notices of others (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1873), writes:

His [i.e. Robert Sandeman] principal doctrine from which all his other erroneous teachings sprang, was his doctrine of Christian faith. Hervey, Whitefield, Erskine and others substantially acquiesced in Wesley's\* definition, namely:

"Christian faith is not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death and resurrection; a recumbency on him as our atonement and our life as given us and living in us."

Sandeman's views were widely different as a few extracts from his book will show:

"Every doctrine which teaches us to do, or to endeavour anything towards our acceptance with God, stands opposed to the doctrine of the apostles; which instead of directing us what to do, sets before us all that the most disquieted conscience can require, in order to acceptance with God, as already done and finished by Jesus Christ. What Christ has done is that which pleases God; what he hath done, is that which quiets the guilty conscience of man as soon as he knows it; so that whenever he hears of it, he has no occasion for any other question but this: 'Is it true or not?' If he finds it true he is happy; if not he can reap no comfort by it. If then we slight the comfort arising from the bare persuasion of this, it must be owing at bottom, to our slighting this bare truth, and to our slighting the bare work of Christ, and our considering it too narrow a foundation whereon to rest the whole of our acceptance with God." (vol 1, p. 17.)

"Aspasia tells us: Faith is a real persuasion that Christ died for me [...] that Christ died is indeed a truth fully ascertained in the Scripture, that Christ died for me is a point not so easily settled..." (vol 1, p. 20.)

The foregoing extracts contain the kernel of his heresy. By the obedience and sufferings of Christ a number of persons, the elect, are accepted or justified of God. The Gospel declares this. It is the sinner's privilege and duty to believe this general statement — not to believe on Christ as his Saviour (for he has no authority to do that), but simply to become persuaded of the truthfulness of

the gospel's general declaration.... pp.140,142-143.

\*The Evangelical Revival in which Wesley, who was Arminian in his theology, was one of the chief protagonists, was greatly undervalued by Sandeman. (Glas and Sandeman were Calvinistic.) Sandeman was scathing that many followed Wesley's theological teaching and said of him: 'Mr Wesley...may justly be reckoned one of the most virulent reproachers of God that this Island has produced'. For anyone who knows anything about Wesley as a man and as a tireless worker for Christ these are poisonous words.

15 Riley, *The Hammer and the Anvil*, p.18.

16 Ibid. p.19.

17 A Plain and Full Account of the Christian Practices Observed by the Church in Saint Martin's le Grand, London, and other Churches in Fellowship with them. In a letter to a friend, [by S. Pike] (London, 1766). [n.pub.]

18 A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1965), p.875. Strong defines an Antinomian as: '[One who] holds that, since Christ's obedience and sufferings have satisfied the demands of the law (i.e. the moral law), the believer is free from obligation to observe it.' It is interesting that Strong names Robert Sandeman as an example of an Antinomian.

19 Oswald Allen's *Memoirs*, pp.201,203.

20 Ibid. pp.339-347(odd page nos. only).

21 Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches in London, Westminster and Southwark: including the lives of their ministers, from the rise of Nonconformity to the present time. With an Appendix on the origin, progress and present state of Christianity in Britain*, 4 vols (London, 1808-1814), [n.pub] II, p.86.

22 G. Cantor, Michael Faraday: Sandemanian and Scientist (London: Macmillan, 1991), p.165.

23 DNB, article on Pike.

24 R. Sandeman, An Epistolary Correspondence between SP (Samuel Pike) and RS (Robert Sandeman) with Several Additional Letters never Printed Before (London, 1764), [n.pub] Letter VIII, p.118.

25 An excerpt from James Allen's *Memoirs* quoted in a notebook amongst Sandemanian documents currently held by Mr Gerard Sandeman of Edinburgh. p.126.

26 'A letter to Mr Whaley, January 1785', notebook containing excerpts from 'James Allen's *Memoirs*', p.171.

27 Oswald Allen's *Memoirs*, pp.7,9.

28 Ibid. p.9.

29 Ibid. p.120.

30 Dundee University Archive, Letter of Oswald Allen of Scarrhead to Patrick Cochrane of Arbroath 28 March 1819, MS 9/3/8.

31 See chapter VII, note 57.

32 For Oswald and money during his apprenticeship aged 14 to 21 years see Oswald Allen's *Memoirs*, p.19: 'During my apprenticeship my Father allowed me a small weekly payment which was paid to me by Mr Brooks; and tho' it was only 6d and afterwards reduced to 3d, I generally suffered it to accumulate to a sum which would enable me to purchase some little presents for my brothers and sisters, seldom spending

anything upon myself except what was absolutely needful, and I kept a regular account of all my expenses during my apprenticeship which did not in the whole exceed Thirty Pounds; for I was fully aware that my father had a large family with only a small income, and therefore I conceived it my incumbent duty to observe the utmost frugality, which I have invariably adhered to through life, so far as regards my own personal wants.'

33 Ibid. pp.95,97,99.

34 Ibid. p.163.

35 Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD', p.17.

36 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.173

37 Ibid. p.207.

38 Ibid. p.179.

39 Ibid. p.199.

40 Ibid. p.187.

41 Ibid. p.203.

42 James Alderson, 'James Allen of Gayle', The Dalesman, 41 (1979-1980), 293-295 (p.295).

43 Letters in Correspondence by Robert Sandeman, John Glas and their Contemporaries, ed. Daniel Macintosh (Dundee: Privately printed, 1851), p.48.

44 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.23.

45 Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry, 1535-1860, eds. R. Hunter and I. Macalpine (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp.855-856.

46 M. Allen, Essay on the Classification of the Insane (London: John Taylor, 1837), p.24.

47 Ibid. p.23.

48 See Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.239 for the description of Matthew's first wife Mary's death and her confession and distress at her guilt in joining Matthew in smears against Oswald. Also references in Ann Snape's letter to Oswald, Oswald Allen's Memoirs p.216: 'I believe that you have suffered much from the imprudence of your brother, so have our family, particularly in the late melancholy events. [...] I do trust what has happened lately will convince him that his own way is not always the best.' Also M. Allen, Outlines of a Course of Lectures on Chemical Philosophy: or, of a theory which considers attraction, repulsion, electricity, caloric, light, &c. as the diversified phenomena and effects of one power (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1819), p.4. Matthew himself described his second wife's experience of their marriage: 'A long and dreadful succession of most distressing circumstances, to which Mrs Allen (fitted for different scenes) submitted from principle and with fortitude. I shall not add what torture this was at the time or now is on reflection [...]'

49 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.134.

50 Ibid. p.253.

51 Ibid. pp.219,221,223.

52 Ibid. p.239. Oswald Allen's Memoirs seem to indicate that the child was suffocated by being overlaid by its mother — such was considered a criminal offence. It is not clear but Oswald seems to have used his



medical influence to have the matter hushed up.

53 Ibid. p.205.

54 Ibid. p.120.

55 Ibid. p.126.

56 Carlyle was to describe him as: 'having taken the flywheel from his brain' — see p.55, and Edward FitzGerald as being 'As mad as any of his own patients.' R. B. Martin, Tennyson: the Unquiet Heart (London: Faber, 1983), p.254.

57 Ibid. pp. 114,116.

## CHAPTER II

1 York Library, Oswald Allen's Memoirs, 9Y20/12631, p.241.

2 Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire & Cheshire for the Years 1891-1892 (Liverpool, 1895):

'The Stranger in Liverpool for 1816 mentions that "near the Baptist Chapel in Mathew Street is the Glasite or Sandemanian Chapel". When this chapel was erected and the length of time it was used as a place of worship by the sect is uncertain, for we find that from 1821 to 1840 their regular meeting-house was in Gill Street, adjoining and forming part of Mr Bartlett's house, the corner of Pembroke place. This plain unassuming brick building, .... measured 33 feet by 26 feet with seat room for 190 persons. From 1840 to 1845 the chapel appears to have been closed for public worship, perhaps from the paucity of attendance of Sandemanian worshippers. In the latter year a new denomination held their regular meetings within the building...'

3 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, pp.369-370: 'On Sabbath morning after breakfast I went to the Sandemanian meeting and was much surprised to see so small a congregation in such a populace town, scarcely amounting to 40 individuals including children. The time of worship was chiefly occupied by singing, praying and reading the Scriptures. Old Mr Burgess presided and made a short discourse, I think nearly verbatim of what I have before heard him preach. I did not wish to make myself known lest I should experience what might have been painful to my feelings, being aware of the light in which they view all who are not included within the pale of their communion. After the conclusion of the meeting I walked down to the Docks and proceeded to find out Mr Whyllie's meeting, the Sandemanian Baptists, where I attended in the afternoon, and afterwards returned to the Hotel to dinner. '

4 M. Allen, Essay on the Classification of the Insane (London: John Taylor, 1837), p.29.

5 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.255.

6 Ibid. p.241.

7 Ibid. p.371.

8 Ibid. p.241.

9 Ibid. p.300.

10 Arrangements were made for Oswald Allen to begin medical studies in Edinburgh in 1789 but due to the death of his employer and the opening of the York Dispensary this never came about. See Oswald Allen's Memoirs. pp.65-67.

11 J. Lockhart, 'Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk', D. Horn, A Short History of The University of Edinburgh, 1556-1889 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), p.117.

12 A. Bower, The Edinburgh Students' Guide, or, an Account of the Classes of the University, arranged under the Four Faculties, etc. (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1822), p.6.

13 Ibid. p.XXIV.

14 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.251.

15 Ibid. p.236.

16 For William Allen see, Irene Ashby, William Allen (London: Edward Hicks, 1893).

17 Ibid. p.79.

18 Probable successor to William Strahan (1715-1785), printer and publisher who became partner with Millar in London, with whom he produced Johnson's Dictionary.

19 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.255.

20 Ibid. p.265.

21 M. Allen, Outlines of a Course of Lectures on Chemical Philosophy: or, of a theory which considers attraction, repulsion, electricity, caloric, light, &c. as the diversified phenomena and effects of one power (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1819), p.4.

22 D. Horn, University of Edinburgh, p.109.

23 M. Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD (Aberdeen), 1783-1845', Medical History, 9 (1965), p.18

24 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.265.

25 Ibid. p.271.

26 Ibid. p.265.

27 Ibid. p.208: 'During the summer months the business is extremely lucrative'.

28 Allen, Outlines, p.4.

29 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.192. Joseph Gurney Bevan (1753-1814), Quaker; entered his father's business of chemist and druggist in 1776; retired 1794. William Allen, Quaker, scientist, and philanthropist, took over Bevan's chemical establishment at Plough Court, in 1795 and it became known as Allen and Hanburys, the wholesale side of the business still retained the name of Bevan.

30 Ibid. pp.206,208.

31 M. Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD (Aberdeen), 1783-1845', in Medical History, 9 (1965), p. 18.

32 Allen, Outlines, 'Advertisement', p.4.

33 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.63. Mary Allen's letter to Oswald.

34 D. Knight, Ideas in Chemistry: a History of the Science (London: Athlone, 1992), p.72.

35 Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794), chemist, born in Paris. He showed that air is a mixture of gases which he named oxygen and nitrogen and thus disproved the earlier theory of phlogiston. He also devised the modern method of naming chemical compounds. He is considered to be the founder of modern chemistry.

36 Knight, *Ideas in Chemistry*, p.72.

37 A. Bower, *The Edinburgh Students' Guide*, pp.42-43.

38 J. B Morrell, 'Science and Scottish University Reform: Edinburgh in 1826', in *The British Journal of Historical Science*, 6 (1972) 39-56 (pp.54-55) in A. Desmond & J. Moore, *Darwin* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p.27.

39 In the early nineteenth century students were not examined on practical chemistry. Frustrated with this lack of opportunity, in 1815 (a year Allen was a student at the university), a group of Hope's students formed a Chemistry Society which met privately to copy the experiments that Hope had demonstrated. Not all the names of those who participated are recorded. Possibly Allen was amongst them but they appear to have been a group of a much younger age. However, similarly frustrated, it is probable that Allen practised these same experiments on his own. See *The Life of Sir Robert Christison, edited by his sons*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1885) I, pp.57-59. See also M. Gaull, 'Clare and the Dark System', in *John Clare in Context*, eds. H. Haughton, A. Phillips and G. Summerfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.279-294: 'Some of the most advanced scientific theories were offered in entertainment in demonstrations and performances on the same platforms as lectures on literature and art. Constable [...] lectured on the history of landscape painting at the Literary and Scientific Society of Hampstead and at the Royal Institution, where Davy lectured on laughing gas and Coleridge on Shakespeare. [...] In fact, scientific performances offered some very radical ideas at the time when the theatre was still carefully censored'.(p.281)

40 M. Allen 'On Chemical Philosophy', 7 Essays in *The Philosophical Magazine*, 51 & 52 (1818), VI, p.56.

41 Oswald Allen called his brother's Essays 'neo-Platonic'. See chapter III of this thesis, p.85.

42 J. Stillman, *Theophrastus Bombastus Von Hohenheim, Called Paracelsus: His personality and influence as physician, chemist and reformer* (Chicago: Open Court, 1920), p.30.

43 Philip C. Ritterbush, *Overtures To Biology: the Speculations of Eighteenth Century Naturalists* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), p.7.

44 Ibid. p.8.

45 This approach has parallels with twentieth century quantum theorists.

46 Ritterbush, *Overtures To Biology*, p.9. Priestley is most generally remembered as the 'discoverer' of oxygen. He went to France in 1774 and there met chemist Antoine Lavoisier.

47 Knight, *Ideas in Chemistry*, p.75: 'Davy had a "Vision of Chemistry" which would Reveal "A force below the flux of matter."' '

48 Allen, 'On Chemical Philosophy', appendix to Essay I, p.118: '[...] there appears on a superficial view so much contradiction in the different systems that have prevailed in the world. This [...] arises from the divisions and separations of that which is true — it is from dividing that which ought to be joined together [...] This has tended not merely to the exclusion of a comprehensive view of the whole, but each of these parts [...] is carried [...] to the utmost extreme [...]'

Allen, *Outlines*, p.1: 'I conceive that the modern distinctions in science, of a number of different powers and agencies in nature are artificial, arbitrary and fatally injurious to the interests of Philosophy'.

49 H. G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics, An Essay in Cultural History* (London: Constable, 1966), p.179.

50 W. Wordsworth, 'Lines composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey', in H. Bloom and L Trilling, *Romantic Poetry and Prose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), lines 96-103, p.146.

51 P. B. Shelly, 'Queen Mab, 1813 Percy Byshe Shelley' (Oxford: Woodstock, 1990), lines 146-173.

52 Another of these was Andrew Crosse, who in 1837 misinterpreted his observation of water mites in his electrical apparatus and claimed that his electrical currents had brought them into being. Though soon proved wrong, he is an example of someone who had hopes that electricity would prove to be the 'universal proximate cause' for which he was seeking. See Ritterbush, p.199, n3.

53 T. H Levere, 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge: a Poet's View of Science', Chemists and Chemistry in Nature and Society, 1770-1879 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), XII p.34. It is possible that some years later Allen could have heard Coleridge speak. We know that his friend Basil Montagu and his wife sometimes accompanied the Carlyles to hear Coleridge. See T. Carlyle, Reminiscences, ed. C. E. Norton, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1887), II, pp. 130-131. Being acquainted with the whole company it is possible that Allen was at some time invited by Montagu to join him.

54 Allen, Outlines, p.2.

55 Allen, 'On Chemical Philosophy' IV, p.349

56 See Adam Walker, A System of Familiar Philosophy: In Twelve Lectures Containing The Elements and The Practical Uses to be Drawn from the Chemical Properties of Matter; the Principles and Application of Mechanics; of Hydrostatics; of Hydraulics; of Pneumatics; of Magnetism; of Electricity; of Optics; and of Astronomy, etc. (London, 1799), [n.pub]. Walker had expressed similar views to Allen in remarkably similar terms in 1799 when describing the purpose of his own book: 'The identity of fire, light, heat, caloric, phlogiston and electricity or rather their being but modifications of one and the same principle, as well as their being the grand agents in the order of nature; these are the leading problems of the work, and the parts which have, in a great measure, any pretensions to novelty.'(p.xi) Walker was an itinerant lecturer who had travelled widely in Europe and in Germany and would probably have had first hand knowledge of Romantic scientists. He lectured widely in England in the last three decades of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century. (He had lectured in York in 1771, before Matthew was born.) Allen could possibly have heard him speak or read of his lectures.

57 Allen, Outlines, p.1.

58 Ibid. p.1.

59 Allen, 'On Chemical Philosophy', V, 428. Essay and page numbers of further quotes will be placed in brackets in the text.

60 T. H. Levere, Poetry Realized in Nature, pp.71-75.

61 'Motion' and 'Union' were also of great importance to Coleridge. He saw them as essential ingredients to dynamic science.

62 Levere, Poetry Realized in Nature, p.63: Such a unified view rendered irrelevant the traditional distinctions amongst the different fields of natural knowledge [...] for Romantic scientists there were no adjacent fields; there were merely various manifestations of the Romantic Spirit.

63 A. Lavoisier, Elements of Chemistry, trans. by Robert Kerr, 3rd edn. (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1796), p.25.

64 Fourcroy was a neuro-physiologist at the Institute of Anatomy in Paris in the 1790s and a colleague of Lavoisier. They published several works together along with others.

65 Levere, 'A Poet's View of Science', in Chemists and Chemistry, p. 36: 'Coleridge's dynamic philosophy also viewed the relations of chemical species as symbolising the relations of polar powers underlying all natural phenomena. Electrolysis for example Revealed the polar relations of hydrogen and oxygen which symbolised the polarity of electrical power, itself a symbol of a stage in the construction of matter that

Coleridge found in Schelling.' Here Allen's wholly independent views come very close to those of Coleridge and Schelling.

66 Allen's explanation of the Grand Agent at work in electrolysis is very complex and the long quotation following is a synthesis of his own words taken from several pages of his Essays. No attempt has been made to explain Allen by paraphrasing him as it is felt this will only complicate an already complicated theory. A selection of his own words makes the clearest explanation.

67 M. Mitchell Waldrop, Complexity and the Emerging Science at the Edge of Chaos (London: Viking, 1994), pp.297-298.

Thermodynamics is a branch of physics dealing with the transformation of heat into other forms of energy. Part of the second law states: 'It is impossible for an unaided self-acting machine to convey heat from one body to another at a higher temperature'.

68 'The ElectroWeak Force — One of the major goals of elementary particle science is showing that even though particles may interact in somewhat different ways, they are ultimately controlled by the same guiding principles. During the early part of the twentieth century, as the first particles were discovered, the forces acting on them were eventually classified as electromagnetic, weak nuclear, and strong nuclear. As time went on, scientists realised that the electromagnetic and weak nuclear forces were really one and the same force.' <http://www.fnal.gov/pub/inquiring/matter/madeof/electroweakforce.html>

"The electroweak force fully explains the interactions experienced as heat, light, magnetism and electricity".

In the 1960s, Sheldon Glashow, Steven Weinberg and Abdus Salam, independently put forward theoretical ideas that unified electromagnetic and weak interactions. '

69 M. Allen, Cases Of Insanity (London: George Swire, 1831), back page advertisement and quotation from the 'Annual Review of Medicine and Collateral Science for 1818' of the London Medical Repository.

70 One of the few extant copies of Allen's Outlines of A Course of Lectures On Chemical Philosophy (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1818) is now in the Poynton Room of the library of The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, Euston Road, London.

71 Allen, Outlines, pp.1-3.

72 Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle, 1814-1826, ed. C. E. Norton, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1886), I, p.94.

73 Ibid. pp.135-136.

74 Allen, Outlines, p.3.

75 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.212.

76 Ibid. p.216.

77 The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle, eds. C. Sanders and K Fielding, 24 vols (North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1976), I (1812-1821) p.252.

### **CHAPTER III**

1 York Library, Oswald Allen's Memoirs, 9Y20/12631, p.286.

2 Ibid.p.286.

3 Jonathan Gray, History of the York Lunatic Asylum: With an Appendix Containing Minutes of the

Evidence of the Cases of Abuse Lately Inquired Into by a Committee, etc. (York, 1815), [n.pub] p.12.

4 A. Scull, Museums of Madness: The Social Organization of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England. (London: Allen Lane, 1979), p.140, n1.

5 S. Tuke, Description of the Retreat: An Institution Near York for Insane Persons of the Society of Friends: Containing an Account of its Origin and Progress, The Modes of Treatment, and a Statement of Cases with an Elevation and Plans of the Building (York and Philadelphia, 1813)[n pub].

6 British Library, C. Gaskell-Milnes, 'Passages in the History of the York Asylum' (Wakefield: W. H. Milnes, 1902), Microfilm, MIC.A.7206.(8.), Preface.

7 A. Scull, The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain 1700-1900 (New Haven, Con.: Yale University Press, 1993), p.121.

8 John Pollock, Shaftesbury: The Poor Man's Earl (Oxford: Lion, 1985), p.33.

9 Ibid. p.34.

10 K. Jones, Lunacy, Law and Conscience 1744-1845: The Social History of the Care of the Insane (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), p.115. See also A. D. Leigh, The Historical Development of British Psychiatry (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p.134: 'The tone of the book [*Sketches from Bedlam*] is coarse, the disclosure of individual case histories unethical. '

11 M. Allen, Essay on the Classification of the Insane (London: John Taylor, 1837), pp.111 and 209.

12 Anon, Sketches in Bedlam: or, Characteristic Traits of Insanity, as Displayed in the Cases of One Hundred and Forty Patients Confined in New Bethlem, to the Above are Added, a Succinct History of the Establishment, Its Rules, Regulations, Forms of Admission, Treatment of Patients, etc. by a Constant Observer (London: Sherwood, Jones, 1823).

13 Borthwick Institute, York, 'Register of Patients from 1777, admitted 6 August 1800'.

14 Allen, Classification, p.164.

15 K. Jones, Lunacy, Law and Conscience, p.115.

16 Allen, Classification, p.100.

17 Anon, Sketches from Bedlam, pp.51-52.

18 Borthwick Institute, York, 'Register of Patients from 1777, admitted 1802'.

19 Allen, Classification, p.188.

20 Allen, Classification, p.82.

21 Allen does not state his source but he is probably quoting from Nathaniel Parker Willis, Pencilings by the Way, 1st edn. London, 1835 (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1942). See n.77 of chapter V of this thesis. There is also a description of the Aversa Asylum in G. M. Burrows, Commentaries on the Causes, Forms and Symptoms and Treatment, Moral and Medical of Insanity (London: T. & G. Underwood, 1828), p.526.

22 M. Allen, Cases of Insanity: With Medical Moral and Philosophical Observations and Essays upon them (London: George Swire, 1831), pp.74-75.

23 House of Commons, 'Report of the Select Committee on Madhouses, 1815', p.36.

- 24 W. Bynum, 'Rationales Of Therapy', Medical History, 18 (1974), p. 324. Also, John Griscom, A Year In Europe. Comprising A Journal of Observations in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Switzerland, The North of Italy and Holland in 1818 and 1819, 2 vols (Boston, Mass.: Wells & Lilly, 1823), II, pp.307-308: '[The York Asylum] is a large and handsome building and at present accommodates about seventy men and 40 women [...] The far safer and more salutary method pursued in The Retreat, was afterwards adopted, of allowing no salary to the physician and subjecting every part of the institution to regular and faithful inspection.'
- 25 M. Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD (Aberdeen), 1783-1845', Medical History, 9 (1965), p.18.
- 26 A. Foss and K. Trick, St. Andrews Hospital Northampton: The First 150 Years (1838-1988) (Cambridge: Granta, 1989), p.28.
- 27 L. D. Smith, 'Behind Closed Doors, Lunatic Asylum Keepers, 1800-1860', Social History of Medicine, I, 3 (1988), 301-327 (p.306).
- 28 J. M. Granville, Care And Cure Of The Insane, 1877, I, p.99 in, A. Scull, Museums of Madness, p.182.
- 29 Allen, Classification. p.ix.
- 30 Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD', p.22.
- 31 Yorkshire Gazette, 9 July 1819.
- 32 R. Cooter, Phrenology in the British Isles: An Annotated, Historical Biobibliography and Index (London: Scarecrow, 1989), p.4: 22.
- 33 R. Cooter, The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Science Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press , 1984), p.153.
- 34 Oswald Allen's Memoirs pp.271, 273. See chapter II under Oswald's visit to Edinburgh.
- 35 Oswald Allen's Memoirs p.286.
- 36 Ibid. pp.282,284.
- 37 Ibid. p.359.
- 38 Ibid. pp.361,363.
- 39 Borthwick Institute, York, 'Annual Reports', BOO 1/2/2.
- 40 Ibid. 'Register of Cases 1816-1845', BOO 6/2/21.
- 41 M. Allen, 'What is Truth', in The Anthropological Magazine And Christian Physician, IV (Oct. 1838), 49-59, 109-114 (p.113).
- 42 A. Digby, Madness, Morality, and Medicine: A Study of The York Retreat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.208.
- 43 Allen, Classification, p.6.
- 44 Allen, Classification, pp.12-16. The root cause Allen saw as: 'His vanity had been fed by flattery and example — he was bred in vanity's hothouse, from over excitation and too little collision with the world he fancied himself a second Crichton [...] constantly meeting with disappointments and mortifications on his entrance into his profession and the real business of life. '

45 Allen, *Classification*, p. 14.

46 B. Crowther, Practical Remarks on Insanity: To Which is Added, A Commentary on the Dissection of the Brains of Maniacs; with some Account of Diseases Incident to the Insane. (London: Thos. Underwood, 1811). See also House of Commons, 'Report of The Committee for Better Regulation of Madhouses, 1815', p.129.

47 Bynum, 'Rationales Of Therapy', p.327. Allen's practice of treating the individual according to his needs began in 1820. A few others followed, but in general medical practice it took much longer to become an established approach. Nearly 20 years later the following comment was made: 'In common practice, if insanity declares itself, and resists bleeding, blistering and purging, all the anxiety of the practitioner is to get the patient out of his hands, and to send him no matter where, so that he sees no more of him.' 'Prichard, Esquirol, Allen, Ellis, Ferrarese, Greco, Farr, Crowther, etc. On Insanity', The British and Foreign Medical Review, 7 (1839), p.2.

48 A. Morison MD, Cases of Mental Disease: with Practical Observations on Medical Treatment for the Use of Students (London: Longman & S. Highley, 1828), pp.8,10.

49 Allen, *Classification*, p.6 and Borthwick Institute, York, 'Register of Cases 1816-1845', BOO 6/2/21.

50. This phrase is used by Allen in both his major works, *Essay on the Classification of the Insane and Cases of Insanity* and in the last of his printed works "What is Truth", in The Anthropological Magazine and Christian Physician, IV (1838), p 58.

51 Allen, *Cases of Insanity*, pp.74-76.

52 Tuke, *Description of the Retreat*, p.150.

53 Allen. 'What is Truth', in The Anthropological Magazine and Christian Physician, IV (London, 1838), 49-59, 109-114. Page numbers are given in brackets in the text for subsequent quotations from this article.

54 G. M. Burrows, Commentaries on the Causes, Forms, Symptoms, & Treatment, Moral & Medical, of Insanity (London: T. & G. Underwood, 1828) and possibly Sir Alexander Crichton, An Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Mental Derangement. Comprehending a concise system of the physiology and pathology of the human mind. And a history of the passions and their effects. [With an appendix entitled: "Medical Aphorisms, on melancholy, and various other diseases connected with it," by Johann E. Greding.] 2 vols (London: T. Cadell; W. Davies, 1798).

55 A. Combe, Principles of Physiology Applied to the Preservation of Health, and to the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, 1834).

56 Voisin opened a school for the education of idiots at the Bicêtre and ran his own private asylum at Vanvres. He also lectured at the Paris Lycée. See also C. Gibbon, Life of George Combe, II, pp.257-258 and Martin Staum, "'Physiognomy and Phrenology" at the Paris Athénée', Journal of the History of Ideas, 56 (1995), 443-456 (pp.445,456.)

57 Possibly Jean-Pierre Falret (1794-1870).

58 The alienist James Cowles Prichard (1786-1848) played down the role of the brain and held the view that insanity arose from a dysfunction of the viscera.

59 Allen was from the beginning interested in the 'hereditary stock'. See his case histories of patients in 'Classification' and 'Cases of Insanity' where his initial inquiry was always concerning the family and upbringing of the patients. Allen was here expanding on his earlier work to establish cause and counter-balance. This shows that his views had not intrinsically altered from his early practice.

60 Allen, *Classification*, pp.155-156.



- 61 Ibid. p.163.
- 62 Borthwick Institute, York, 'Register of Patients from 1777, admitted 1801'.
- 63 Allen, Classification, p. 168.
- 64 Borthwick Institute, York, 'Register of Patients from 1777, admitted 1806'.
- 65 Allen, Classification, p. 193.
- 66 Ibid. p.188.
- 67 Borthwick Institute, York, 'Register of Patients from 1777, admitted 1801'.
- 68 Allen, Classification, p. 203.
- 69 Borthwick Institute, York, 'Register of Patients from 1777, admitted 1803'.
- 70 Allen, Classification, p. 190.
- 71 Ibid. pp. 188, 190, 196. No asylum regime would ever be perfect. However the effects of eighteenth century abuses lingered on into the mid-nineteenth century. In 'What Asylums Were, Are and Ought to Be', W. A. F. Browne said in the preface that 'The old system [was] not all together exploded.' That was in 1837.
- 72 Dr W. S. Hallaran, Practical Observations on the Causes and Cure of Insanity (London, 1818), p.94.
- 73 Superintendent of the Cork Asylum.
- 74 British Library, C. Gaskell-Milnes, 'Passages in the History of the York Asylum' (Wakefield: W. H. Milnes, 1902), Microfilm, MIC.A.7206.(8.), p.15.
- 75 Allen, Classification, p.198.
- 76 Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD', p 21 At the end of her article Barnet adds the following Appendix:

APPENDIX	
BOOKS ON MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE YORK MEDICAL LIBRARY DURING MATTHEW ALLEN'S CURATORSHIP	
ARNOLD, THOMAS, <i>Observations on the Nature, Kinds, Causes and Prevention of Insanity, Lunacy or Madness</i> , 2 vols., Leicester, G. Ireland, 1782 6.	
BURROWS, GEORGE MAN, <i>Cursory remarks on legislative regulation of the insane, etc.</i> , London, Harding, 1819. (Bought in 1819, price £1.)	
CHEYNE, GEORGE, <i>The English Melancholy: or a treatise of nervous diseases, etc.</i> , London, S. Powell for George Risk, etc., 1733. (Purchased in 1812.)	
CHEYNE, JOHN, <i>A Second Essay on Hydrocephalus Acutus</i> , Dublin, Gilbert & Hodges, London, T. Underwood, 1812. (Purchased 1815.)	
COX, JOSEPH MASON, <i>Practical Observations on Insanity</i> , London, C. & R. Baldwin, 1806.	
CROWTHER, BEVAN, <i>Practical remarks on insanity, etc.</i> , London, T. Underwood, 1811. (Purchased 1811.)	
FLEMING, MALCOLM, <i>Neuropathia</i> , York, Caesar Ward, etc., 1740.	
FORSTER, THOMAS, <i>Observations on the Casual and Periodical Influence of Particular States of the Atmosphere on Human Health and Disease, Particularly Insanity</i> , London, T. & G. Underwood, 1817.	
GORDON, JOHN, <i>Observations on the Structure of the Brain, etc.</i> , Edinburgh, W. Blackwood, 1817. (Bought in 1817, price 7s. 6d.)	
HALLARAN, WILLIAM SAUNDERS, <i>Practical Observations on the Causes and Cure of Insanity</i> , Cork, Edwards & Savage, 1818. (Bought in 1819, price 9s.)	
HASLAM, JOHN, <i>Observations on Insanity, etc.</i> , London, F. & C. Rivington, 1798. <i>Observations on Madness and Melancholy</i> , London, J. Callow, 1809.	
HILL, GEORGE NESSE, <i>An Essay on the Prevention and Cure of Insanity</i> , London, J. & J. H. Haddock for Longman, 1814.	
MAYO, THOMAS, <i>Remarks on Insanity, etc.</i> , London, T. & G. Underwood, 1817. (Bought in 1818, price 12s.)	
MORGAGNI, GIOVANNI, <i>The Seats and Causes of Diseases Investigated by Anatomy</i> , London, A. Miller & T. Cadell, 1769.	
PINEL, PHILIPPE, <i>A Treatise on Insanity, etc.</i> , Sheffield, W. Todd for Cadell & Davies, 1806. (Purchased 1811.)	
ROBINSON, NICHOLAS, <i>A New System of the Spleen, Vagus and Hypochondriack Melancholy—Cause and Cure of Melancholy, Madness and Lunacy</i> , London, H. Butterworth, 1799.	
ROWLEY, WILLIAM, <i>A Treatise on Female, Nervous, Hysterical, Hypochondriack, Bilious, Cephalic Diseases, etc.</i> , London, C. Nourse, 1758. (Purchased 1816.)	
SUTTON, THOMAS, <i>Treatise on Delirium Tremens, etc.</i> , London, T. Underwood, 1813.	
TOKE, SAMUEL, <i>Description of the Retreat</i> , York, W. Alexander, 1819.	
REID, JOHN, <i>Essays on Insanity, etc.</i> , London, Longman, 1816. (Purchased 1816.)	
WILLIS, FRANCIS, <i>A Treatise on Mental Derangement</i> , London, Longman, 1823.	
YEATS, DAVID GRANT, <i>A Statement of the Early Symptoms which Lead to Water in the Brain</i> , London, J. Callow, 1815. (Purchased 1815.)	

The books were sparse and many of them out of date. Allen made the most he could with what he had.

77 Borthwick Institute, York, 'Proceedings of the Committee, 9 April 1821', BOO 1/1/2/1.

78 Borthwick Institute, York, BOO 3/15/1/1.

79 L. D. Smith, 'Behind Closed Doors', p.313.

80 Allen, Classification, p.13.

81 Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD', p.21.

82 M. Allen, Lectures on the Temper and Spirit of the Christian Religion, 2nd ed (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1834), 'Advertisement'.

83 Allen, Classification, p.6.

84 An example of such is found in G. M. Burrows, An Inquiry Into Certain Errors Relative to Insanity and Their Consequences, Physical, Moral and Civil (London: T.& G. Underwood, 1820), p.225: In 1677 there was a chaplain at Bethlem whose office was "to visit the lunatics and to instruct and pray with such of them as are capable of it."

A few years later Allen was to meet William Ellis, superintendent of the West Riding Asylum from 1818. Ellis, a Methodist local preacher, conducted regular morning prayers and Sunday services for his patients and asylum staff. See A. L. Ashworth, Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield: One Hundred and Fifty Years, a History (Private Publication, 1975), p.36.

Many superintendents thought their establishments were the first to hold services for their patients. For example the owners of Brislington House. F. and C. Kerr Fox, Brislington House near Bristol an Asylum for the Cure and Reception of Insane Persons: Established by Edward Long Fox MD AD 1804 (Bristol: Light and Ridler, 1836), p.9: Some merit may be claimed to this institution as having been the first to establish regular divine service among its inmates. They were in fact established long before Allen was at The York Asylum but their services were conducted by the local parish priest. By 1828 holding some sort of religious service in asylums had become compulsory by law. Allen, however, was making the claim to be the first regular preacher himself.

85 Griscom, A Year In Europe, II, pp. 307-308. John Griscom, who visited the Tukes for three days in March 1819 was professor of chemistry and natural philosophy at The New York Institution and a member of the Lit & Phil Society of New York.

86 M. Allen, Lectures on the Temper and Spirit of the Christian Religion, 1st edn. (London: Baldwin, Craddock & Joy, 1820), Preface.

87 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.302.

88 Allen, Temper and Spirit, 1st ed 'Dedication'.

89 The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle, eds. Sanders C. and Fielding K., 24 vols (Duke University Press: North Carolina, 1970), I (1812-1821), p.278.

90 Ibid. Letter dated October 8th, 1820.

91 Montagu was a minor writer on legal, philosophical and religious topics and the producer of numberless pamphlets. Allen, who was a personal friend of Montagu, knew his works well.

92 Allen, 'Lectures on the Temper and Spirit', 1st edn 'Preface' p.xvi.

93 Ibid. 'Preface' p.xxiv. Burrow's book was G. M. Burrows, An Inquiry into Certain Errors Relative to Insanity, and Their Consequences, Physical, Moral and Civil (London: T. & G. Underwood, 1820).

George Mann Burrows MD had his own private medical practice and was proprietor of Clapham House Private Asylum in Surrey. Other asylum superintendents who thought patients with religious delusions should be discouraged from attending religious services, were William Finch of Laverstock House Asylum and Charles Newington of Ticehurst Private Asylum. Mackenzie, *Psychiatry for the Rich*, p.90.

94 Ibid. 'Preface' p.xviii. Surely this is Allen speaking from his own experience.

95 Ashworth, *Stanley Royd Hospital*, p.36.

96 G. M. Burrows, *An Inquiry into Certain Errors*, quotations from this book which follow have page numbers in brackets in the text.

97 Borthwick Institute, York, 'Register of Cases 1816-1845', BOO 6/2/21 11 April 1820.

98 Allen, *Classification*, p.6. The patient described here was obviously suffering from a misunderstanding of the Calvinistic doctrines of the Christian faith. Allen knew the problem well, Sandemanianism being exactly such an error. He was able to give the sufferer the correct balance of Calvinistic belief — saying, not that Calvinism was wrong, but that it was often misinterpreted and wrongly understood. Calvinism, since the days of John Calvin himself, has been falsely blamed for a myriad evils, including insanity. T. B Clarkson, Chaplain to The West Riding Asylum from 1833 to 1869 left his dairies, which were a requirement of the Visiting Magistrates, to the hospital archive. In these he meditates on such fascinating questions as: the future state of the congenital idiot, religion as a causative factor of insanity, Romanism and Calvinism etc. See A. L. Ashworth, p.42.

99 Ibid. p. 6.

100 M. Allen, *Allen Versus Dutton* (London: George Swire, 1833), see affidavits, pp.8-103.

101 Allen, *Lectures on the Temper And Spirit*, 1st edn Preface, p.vi.

102 Johann Spurzheim along with Dr Franz Gall of Vienna developed a theory of mind and brain which became popular and influential in Britain in the second decade of the nineteenth century and became known as phrenology. For further details see chapter four.

103 See J. Spurzheim, 'Periods of Irritability' in *Observations on the Deranged: Manifestations of the Mind, or Insanity*. (London, 1817),[n.pub] pp.191-196.

104 Allen, *Cases of Insanity*, p.13. Further quotations will have the page number in brackets in the text.

105 J. Kennedy MRCS, *The History of the Contagious Cholera: With Facts Explanatory of its Origin and Laws and of a Rational Method of Cure*, 1st edn (London, 1831)[n.pub].

106 An expression often used by Allen meaning nervous force, the non-corporeal part of our being, expressed through temperament.

107 Allen, *Cases of Insanity*, pp.39-40. John Mason Good MRCS. FRS.(1764-1827) Physician and author, active member of Guy's Hospital Physical Society, editor of *Critical Review*.

108 G. M. Burrows, *Commentaries on the Causes, Forms and Symptoms and Treatment, Moral and Medical of Insanity* (London: T. & G. Underwood, 1828).

109 Ibid. p.238.

110 For the history of cholera and the horrific epidemics of the nineteenth century see R. Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), pp.402-404.

111 Correspondence between Carlyle and Allen makes it clear that Allen had met Edward Irving along

with Carlyle initially in Edinburgh and in Kirkcaldy in 1817. References show that Allen and Irving were both living in Bristoe Street in Edinburgh in June and July 1819 ( For Allen see Oswald Allen's Memoirs p.286 where he writes to Oswald from Bristoe Street in July, and for Irving see D. Masson, Edinburgh Sketches and Memories. (London: A. & C. Black, 1892), p.265: June 1819 [...] Irving's letters from Bristoe Street to the Martin's of Kirkcaldy.) From publishers advertisements on other of Allen's books we know that he wrote and had published by Geo. Swire An Open Letter on Christian Forbearance to Edward Irving and the Assembly of the Church of Scotland. No copy appears to be extant.

112 Sanders and Fielding eds. Collected Letters, I (1812-1821), p.252. Letter dated 8 October, 1820.

113 Ibid. Letter dated October 19th.

114 Ibid. Letter dated October 22nd to Graham Fergusson.

115 Ibid. Letter dated October 22nd to Graham Fergusson.

116 Ibid. Letter dated October 22nd to Graham Fergusson.

117 D. Wilson, Carlyle Till Marriage (London: Kegan Paul, 1923), p.205.

118 Sanders and Fielding, eds. Collected Letters, I (1812-1821), p.253. Letter dated January 22nd, 1821.

119 Griscom, A Year In Europe, II p.413: 'The last Annual Report of the directors demonstrates the efficiency of the treatment here practised and at the same time shows the importance of commencing the curative treatment of insanity at the earliest stage of its appearance. Of 30 cases mentioned in the report as "old cases" 4 were cured, 6 relieved and 7 improved. Whereas out of 48 recent cases admitted within the last year 24 were cured, 9 relieved and 4 improved. Some of the patients become so much attached to the place where they have experienced such signal relief that they are very reluctant to leave it, even after their perfect restoration. The terms in this asylum for the board and accommodation of patients vary from 8s to 2 guineas per week. The number at the latter price is greater than any other. Improvement by moral treatment is the object most carefully aimed at. Among the sources of amusement is a library and reading room. Instead of chaining those who are refractory their hands and wrists are firmly fastened together inside of a leathern cuff which effectually prevents them from injuring themselves or others.'

120 Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD', p.18.

121 Sanders and Fielding, eds. Collected Letters, I (1812-1821), p.253. Letter dated January 22nd, 1821.

122 R. Cooter, The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science, p.153.

123 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.286.

124 Ibid. p.288.

125 Ibid. p.288.

126 Ibid. p.298.

127 Borthwick Institute, York, 'Annual Reports, June 1827', BOO1/2/2.

128 See L. D. Smith, 'Cure, comfort and Safe Custody': Public Lunatic Asylums in Early Nineteenth Century England, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999), p.75.

129 Allen, Classification, 'Preface'.

130 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, pp.296,298.

131 Ibid. p.302. Socinianism: The teaching of the preacher and reformer Laelius Socinus(1525-1562) and

his nephew, the theologian, Faustus Socinus(1539-1604). They denied the divinity of Christ and were the fathers of nineteenth century Unitarianism

This was a mere speculation on Oswald's part. There was no evidence then or later that Matthew was in the least bit interested in Unitarianism. Maybe Matthew's passing acquaintance with Charles Wellbeloved — see Carlyle's Visit above — prompted this remark. Matthew had left behind the exclusive social attitudes of the Sandemansians.

132 Ibid. p.296.

133 Ibid. p.296.

134 Ibid. p.298.

135 Ibid. p.300.

136 Borthwick Institute, York, BOO 3/16/1/1.

137 Borthwick Institute, 'Register of Cases' 18 December 1822.

138 Borthwick Institute, 'Proceedings of Committee', 7 October, 1823.

139 Borthwick Institute, 'Register of Cases', 1 October 1823.

140 Borthwick Institute, York, BOO 3/15/1/1, No. 24.

141 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.290.

142 See Borthwick Institute, 'Register of Cases' Op.Cit. October 1st, 1823, also Essex County Record Office, 'Copies of Minutes of Visitors of Houses Licensed for the Reception of the Insane, and Annual Reports', Q/ALp 7, p.8.

143 E. C. R .O, 'Minutes of Visitors', Ibid. p.8.

144 Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD', p.19.

145 Ibid. p.19. In fact the court of quarter sessions did not officially license High Beech Asylum until 1829.

146 Allen, Classification, p.11.

147 Throughout this thesis the name High Beech is used. It will be found as such on modern maps. Allen himself generally used the older name of High Beach, which described the high sand and gravel banks sometimes found within the forest at Epping.

148 Borthwick Institute, 'Register Of Cases', 11 April 1820.

149 E. C. R .O, '1851 Census Return', HO107/1704 f.95.

150 Allen, Dutton, 'Affidavit of Captain Thomas Brooke', pp.101-103.

151 E. C. R .O, 'Land Tax Returns 1826', Q/RPC/995.

#### **CHAPTER IV**

1 M. D. Wilson, 'Body and Mind from the Cartesian Point of View', Body and Mind, Past Present and Future, ed. R. W. Rieber (New York: Academic Press, 1980) p.42

2 R. M. Young, Mind, Brain and Adaptation in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970) p.2

3 Disney Alexander MD A Lecture on Phrenology: as Illustrative of the Moral and Intellectual Capacities of Man (London: Baldwin, Craddock & Joy, 1826), p.17.

4 F. Gall and J. Spurzheim, Anatomie et Physiologie du Système Nerveux en Générale, et du Cerveau en Particulier, avec des Observations sur la Possibilité de Reconnaître plusieurs Dipositions Intellectuelles et Morales de l'Homme et des Animaux, par la Configuration de leurs Têtes. [n.trans.] 4 vols and Atlas (Paris:1810-1819) II, p.5, Owsei Temkin, 'Gall and the Phrenological Movement', Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 21 (1947), 275-321.(p.282).

5 J. Gordon, 'The Doctrines of Gall and Spurzheim', Edinburgh Review, 25 (1815), 227-268 (p.227).

6 A. Desmond and J. Moore, Darwin (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p.33.

7 D. B. Horn, A Short History of the University of Edinburgh, 1556-1869 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), p. 109.

8 G. Cantor and S. Shapin, 'Phrenology in Early Nineteenth Century Edinburgh: an Historiographical Discussion', Annals of Science, 32 (1975), 195-256 (p.199).

9 Charles Gibbon, The Life of George Combe, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1878), I, pp.92-93.

10 Ibid. pp.94-95.

11 The German, Carl Vogt, a professor of natural history, exiled to Geneva after the 1848 Revolution, lectured in England in the 1860s. He was an extreme Socialist/Materialist and wrote Lectures on Man: his place in Creation, and in the History of the Earth, ed. J. Hunt. [Translated from the German.] Published for the Anthropological Society (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1864).

12 Allen had left Edinburgh in March 1816, directly after he was released from prison, and only a month before his third child was born. After that his wife became an invalid and he had his lecture circuit to develop. Spurzheim did not arrive in Edinburgh until June 1816. Though Allen may have read or been told of the Debates in Edinburgh they would have seemed very distant and far removed from his own personal problems and subsequent breakdown. Combe's article in The Scotsman was published in the month that Mary Allen died and while Allen was watching at her bedside.

13 Gibbon, Life of George Combe, I, p.98.

14 This word means 'monster', according to the footnote given by Charles Eliot Norton, ed. 'Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle 1814-1826'. Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, 14th edn. Revised by Ivor H. Evans. Gives the following definition for 'Sooterkin': 'A kind of false birth produced by Dutch women by sitting over their stoves; hence an abortive proposal or scheme, and, as applied to literature, an imperfect or a supplementary work.'

15 Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle 1814-1826, ed. Charles Eliot Norton, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1886), I, p.95.

16 Roger Cooter, The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth Century Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.141.

17 Ibid. p.109.

18 'The Works of Thomas Carlyle', [n.date; n.pub] vol II, p.238, R. Williams, Culture And Society 1780-1950 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Chatto & Windus, 1961), p.87.

18 Gibbon, Life of George Combe, I, p.302.

19 Ibid. p.302.

20 G. Combe, Moral Philosophy: or, the Duties of Man Considered in his Individual, Social and Domestic Capacities (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1840), pp.171,176.

21 Gibbon, Life of George Combe, I, pp.218,220,251.

22 J. Conolly, in J. Barlow, On Man's Power Over Himself to Prevent or Control Insanity (London: William Pickering, 1843), p.35.

23 R. Cooter, Cultural Meaning, p.118. It was with just such a shallow position as this that Matthew Allen began his use of phrenology, but as will be shown he moved on to see the weaknesses of such an outlook and to change his ideas about phrenology.

24 M. Allen. 'What is Truth', The Anthropological Magazine and Christian Physician, IV (London, 1838), 49-59 and 109-114. (p 55).

25 'W. C. Ellis,' Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry 1535-1860, eds. R. Hunter and I. Macalpine (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.820.

26 The Asylum as Utopia: W. A. F. Browne and the Mid-Nineteenth Century Consolidation of Psychiatry, ed. A. Scull (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991), p.viii.

27 F. Gall, 'On the Function of the Brain And Each of its Parts', trans. Winslow Lewis, Jr., ed. Nahum Capen (Boston: Phrenological Library, 1835) II, 284, in R. Cooter, 'Phrenology and the British Alienists, ca.1825-1845', 58-104, in Madhouses, Mad-doctors and Madmen: the Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Era, ed. A. Scull (London: Athlone, 1981), p.78.

28 R. Cooter, 'Phrenology and the British Alienists, ca.1825-1845', 58-104, Madhouses, Mad-doctors and Madmen: the Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Era, ed. A. Scull (London: Athlone, 1981), p.78.

29 R. Cooter, Cultural Meaning, p.153

30 Andrew Combe, 'Observations on Mental Derangements', p.353, A. Scull, The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain 1700-1900 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), p.227, n196.

31 M. Allen, Essay on the Classification of the Insane (London: John Taylor, 1837), p.112 n).

32 M. Allen, Cases of Insanity: with Medical, Moral and Philosophical Observations and Essays upon them (London: George Swire, 1831) p.1.

33 This omission of Allen seems significant when considering the shape of Clare's head. Thomas Grimshawe's 1844 portrait of Clare painted three years after he left High Beech, shows a man with a highly distinctive and individual cranium. With bald head, high crown and large, prominent forehead he would have been of immediate interest to any phrenologist.

34 'What is Truth', The Anthropological Magazine and Christian Physician, IV (London, 1838), pp.49-59 and pp.109-114.

35 Allen, Anthropological Magazine, IV, 49-59 (p.59).

36 Allen, Anthropological Magazine, IV, 109-114 (p 109).

37 Cooter, 'British Alienists', p.58.

38 Alexander, A Lecture on Phrenology, p.2.

39 R. Cooter, Phrenology in the British Isles: an Annotated, Historical, Biobibliography and Index (London: Scarecrow Press, 1989), p.3:16.

40 Hull Reference Library, Ist and 2nd Annual Report of the Literary and Philosophical Society (Kingston upon Hull, 1825), p.8.

41 The Rockingham and Hull Weekly Advertiser, 6 Nov 1824, Phrenological Journal and Miscellany (Edinburgh: 1824-1825,), II, pp.159-160.

42 The Hull Weekly Advertiser, 29 October 1824.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid. For a clearer statement of Allen's views on materialism and phrenology see Allen, The Anthropological Magazine, p.113 where he concurs with Félix Voisin and quotes the latter: "When I say that the brain is the material organ of intellectual faculties and moral qualities, I have nothing to fear from the system of interpretations. [...] The eye is the organ of light but it is not the organ of vision. I believe in the immateriality and immortality of the soul, but so long as this last is united to the body, it requires corporeal instruments for its manifestations; and these manifestations are modified, diminished, augmented, or deranged, by the disposition of these instruments."

47 The Hull Weekly Advertiser, 29 October 1824.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 The Literary and Philosophical Society, Kingston Upon Hull, 1825, p.8.

51 Cooter, Popular Science, p.153.

52 Allen, Classification, p.6.

53 York Reference Library, Oswald Allen's Memoirs, 9Y20/12631, p.393.

54 Essex County Record Office, 'Minutes of the Visitors appointed by the Court of Quarter Sessions ', Q/ALp7, p.8.

55 Allen, Classification, pp.34-35.

56 Brotherton Library, Special Collection, MS Dept. 1975/1/1 Third Session, 21 March 1823, Fourth Session 21 November, 1823. Though there is mention of the reading of these papers, the actual documents no longer exist. It is not known in what journal or magazine they were originally printed if at all.

57 Brotherton, Fifth Session, 18 February 1825.

58 Hewitt C. Watson, Statistics on Phrenology: being a Sketch of the Progress and Present State of that Science in the British Islands (London: Longman, Rees, 1836), p.146.

59 Leeds Mercury, 12 March 1825.



60 Ibid.

61 Leeds Intelligencer, 17 March 1825.

62 Leeds Mercury, 19 March 1825.

63 British Library T.1159(9), Richard Hamilton, 'An Essay on Craniology, Being the Subject of a Paper Submitted to the Philosophical And Literary Society, Leeds, December, 2, 1825' (printed London, 1826), p.76.

64 In the Leeds Reference Library under the heading of phrenology are a number of booklets published in the 1820s which mention or discuss the philosophical arguments for and against phrenology. Some of these texts are also in the British Library.

1 The Reverend Richard Winter Hamilton, 'An Essay on Craniology Being the Subject of a Paper Submitted to the Philosophical And Literary Society, Leeds, December, 2, 1825' (London, 1826).

2. H. D. Inglis, 'A Lecture upon the Truth, Reasonableness and Utility of the doctrines of Phrenology: to Which are Added Observations in Reply to "An Essay in Craniology" by the Reverend R. W. Hamilton'.

3. William Wildsmith, 'Concerning the Relative Connexion which Subsists between the Mind and the Brain, with Remarks on Phrenology and Materialism occasioned by opinions expressed by the Reverend R. W. Hamilton, in an "Essay on Craniology," and in a "Series of Lectures on the Intellectual Emotions"' (London: E. Wilson, 1828).

The above three texts along with an article by George Combe are bound together in one volume in the Leeds Reference Library.

A further inter-related debate, can be found in the following texts:

4. J. Wayte MD, Anti-phrenology or Observations to Prove the Fallacy of a Modern Doctrine of the Human Mind called Phrenology (Kings Lynn: 1829).

5. Anon. An Exposure of the Unchristian and Unphilosophical expedients adopted by Anti-phrenologists for the purpose of obstructing the Moral and Philanthropic Tendencies of Phrenology: being a Review of "Anti-Phrenology etc." by J. Wayte (London, 1831).

6. Richard Church, Presumptive Evidence of the Truth and Reasonableness of Phrenology: from a Lecture Delivered before the Chichester Literary and Philosophical Society, 11 Jan 1833 (Chichester: Mason & Son, 1833) Included in this book is: 'Tract on the Defence of Phrenology dedicated to G. Combe' (1825).

A debate took place in Scotland, not however on purely philosophical lines, which can be researched using the following sources:

1. Thomas Stone MD, 'Evidences Against the System of Phrenology Being the Substance of a Paper Read at a Extraordinary Meeting of The Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh' (Edinburgh, 1828).

2. Thomas Stone MD, 'Observations on the Phrenological Developments of Burke and Hare: Including Measurements of the Heads of the most Notorious Thieves in an Edinburgh Jail' (Edinburgh, 1829).

3. Richard Chenevix, 'Gall and Spurzheim — Phrenology', in *Quarterly and Foreign Review*, 2 (1828). pp.12-14.

4. For George Combe's answer to Thomas Stone (1 above), 1829. Stone's rejoinder to Combe (4. above), 1829. W. R. Greg, 'Observation on Stone' Phrenological Journal and Miscellany, VI, 22, 1829. It contains articles on or by Stone, Chenevix, Combe [answer to Stone], Greg, and Spurzheim on 'Education' and 'Burke and Hare'.

A further single work is of note and concerns a debate which took place in Calcutta in 1826 and 1827. David Drummond, Objections to Phrenology: The Substance of a Series of Papers Communicated to The Calcutta Phrenological Society with Additional Notes (printed for the author: Calcutta, 1829)

Drummond, of the Durrumtollah Academy, Calcutta, was an original member of the society which was founded in 1825. After listening to Dr G. Murray Paterson of the Royal Barracks and others he became convinced of the totally insecure foundations of phrenology. He was asked by the society's president to put his objections down in a paper which was read before the members entitled 'The Phenomena of Mind cannot be accounted for on Phrenological Principles'.

Several papers were read in reply and an impasse was reached which led to a complete cessation of the society's meetings. Drummond's approach is different to all the others mentioned above. It is interesting to note that the Dr Paterson, who opposed Drummond so vehemently in Calcutta, was possibly the brother-in-law of Dr Matthew Allen.

65 Watson, *Statistics on Phrenology*, p.144.

66 Hilary Marland, *Medicine and Society in Huddersfield and Wakefield 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1987), p.339. See also R. Cooter, *Biobibliography*, p.3:16.

67 Alexander, *A Lecture on Phrenology*, p.13.

68 Watson, *Statistics on Phrenology*, p.165.

69 Wakefield and Halifax Journal, *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany*, vol II, 1823-1824, in "Notices" following the table of contents.

70 Watson, *Statistics on Phrenology*, p.165.

## CHAPTER V

1 The following is a table of approximate 'cure' rates in random asylums of various types during the period around 1820 to 1845. Sources also show variations, for example between official government records and records kept by asylums — see under Ticehurst. Also included are figures given for some individual private practices.

NAME	TYPE	CURE AS % OF ADMISSIONS	PERIOD	SCOURCE OF DATA
High Beech	Private	48	1832-1844	Visitors' Minute Book
Moorcroft House	Private	60	1840	<u>Lancet</u> , 1 (26 Dec. 1840).
Clapham Retreat	Private	41	1822-1824	G. M. Burrows, <u>Commentaries</u> p.518
Ticehurst	Private	50 20	1844 (gov.) 1844 (asy.)	C. Mackenzie, <u>Psychiatry for the Rich</u> , p.88
Northampton	Charitable	33	1845-1856	A. Foss and K. Trick, <u>St Andrews Hospital</u> , p.91
West Riding	Pauper	41	1820-1829	Ashworth, <u>Stanley Royd Hospital</u> p.27
Glasgow Asylum	Public	50(new cases) 14.5(old cases)	1818	Griscom, <u>Year in Europe</u> , p.413
York Retreat	Quaker	44.7  50.3	1823-1841  1812-1833	Digby, <u>Madness Morality and Medicine</u> . <u>Brit. and For. Med. Rev.</u> 7 (1839),p.20
Salpêtrière and Bicêtre, Paris	Public	39.5 34	1801-1821 1822-1824	Burrows, <u>Commentaries</u> p.519

NAME	TYPE	CURE AS % OF ADMISSIONS	PERIOD	SOURCE OF DATA
Charenton, Paris	Public	37	1815-1817	Ibid. p.519
Senavra, Milan		58	1802-1826	Ibid. p.520
Dr Morison	Private Practice	48	1828	A. Morison, <u>Cases of Mental Disease</u> , p.274
Dr Burrows	Private Practice	91(new cases) 35(old cases)	1828 1828	Burrows, <u>Commentaries</u> , p.518
Hanwell	Pauper	24	May 1831 - Sept 1845	<u>Lancet</u> 2 1845 p.660

2 For further discussion of this see A. Scull, N. Hervey and C. Mackenzie, Masters of Bedlam: The Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p.313, n82.

3 'What is Truth', in The Anthropological Magazine and Christian Physician, IV (London, 1838), p. 53.

4 Probably the only extant copy of this book, M. Allen, Allen Versus Dutton (London: George Swire, 1833) is bound together with his Essay on the Classification of the Insane and is in the Wellcome Institute Library of rare books in London.

5 Allen, Allen Versus Dutton, Title page.

6 M. Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD (Aberdeen) 1783-1845', Medical History, 9 (London, 1965), 16-28 (p.23).

7 Allen, Dutton, affidavits of Henry Galot, p.65, and Basil Montagu, p.77.

8 A. Scull, N. Hervey and C. Mackenzie, Masters of Bedlam, p.7.

9 An example of such an opinion can be found in, M. Jacobi, On the Construction and Management of Hospitals for the Insane: with a particular notice of the Institution at Siegburg. With Introductory Observations by S. Tuke (trans. from the German) ed. J. Kitching (London, 1841), [n.pub] Part I, pp. 2-3.

In an Annual Report written by Dr C. C. Corsellis, Director of the West Riding Asylum from 1831-1853 he made the following telling remark: 'It has not been infrequent in any period of the Institution, to receive patients who have escaped from home and friends, and who impatient of suffering and mismanagement, have fled to the refuge afforded them in the Asylum. Since the publication of the last report 3 such fugitives have been admitted.' Ashworth, p.29.

The proprietors of Brislington House Asylum in Bristol argued strongly, in 1836, against the insane being cared for at home by relatives: '[Moral and physical management] as well as perfect security, and a great degree of liberty to the patient, are seldom attainable in a private family. It is of importance to remove the insane from their own houses and friends, not only on account of the distress and confusion that they produce, and the positive danger that may sometimes ensue; but also because circumstances which excite the maniacal paroxysms are more frequently found to exist at home, than elsewhere, and the disordered mind accumulates delusion upon delusion, from the habitual impressions and associations of ideas, emotions and recollections, incessantly renewed there: for instance one of the most common features of mental disease is an inveterate dislike to or apprehension of, the nearest and dearest friends; on which account the patient is often found to submit much more patiently to the control of a stranger, than to that of relations or of dependants who are timid and unskilled and from affection naturally reluctant to impose restraint, and thus frequently more calculated to inflame than to allay irritation.' F. and C. Kerr Fox, Brislington House near Bristol an Asylum for the Cure and Reception of Insane Persons: Established by Edward Long Fox MD AD 1804 (Bristol: Light and Ridler, 1836), p.7.

See also Note 45 of Chapter VI.

10 C. Mackenzie, Psychiatry for the Rich: A History of Ticehurst Private Asylum 1792-1917 (London: Routledge 1992), p.15.

11 In 1836 the proprietors of Brislington House (established in 1804), an asylum that catered for a number of upper-class patients, wrote the following about 'Class' in their asylum: 'The individuals of one class are not allowed to have any intercourse with those of others in their different houses. As the accommodations vary in proportion to the class, this arrangement prevents invidious comparisons: it is gratifying, by respecting the predilections of persons as to rank in society; and it is useful, by preventing persons of rank and quality from an indiscriminate association with those of inferior manners and condition, which otherwise on their mutual recovery, might lead to inconvenient, if not detrimental acquaintance.' F. and C. Kerr Fox, Brislington House near Bristol

12 The Northampton Public Library, The John Clare Collection, letter from Dr Allen to Cyrus Redding, 25 May, 1841, 51.

13 E. Rickman, Madness, or, the Maniacs' Hall (London, 1841), [n.pub] p.296.

14 M. Allen, Essay on the Classification of the Insane (London: John Taylor, 1837), p.81.

15 In the many descriptions of asylums established between 1820 and 1845 choosing a site with good drainage and proper, adequate ventilation was frequently stressed. These requirements became the expected standard both in public and private lunatic asylums and put asylums well ahead of ordinary hospitals in the field of hygiene. For a description of the other in-patient facility — the hospital — 25 years later, see C. Woodham Smith, Florence Nightingale (London: Constable, 1950), Reprint Society edn. p.266. Woodham-Smith commenting on Miss Nightingale's book, Notes on Hospitals: being two papers read before the National Association for the promotion of social science, 1858, wrote: 'Notes on Hospitals draws an alarming picture of contemporary hospital conditions; walls streaming with damp and often covered with fungus, dirty floors, dirty beds, overcrowded wards, insufficient food and inadequate nursing. The answer to hospital mortality was neither prayer nor self-sacrifice but better ventilation, better drainage and a higher standard of cleanliness.' (London: John W. Parker & Son, 1859).

16 W. A. F. Browne, What Asylums Were, Are, and Ought to Be: Being the Substance of Five Lectures Delivered Before the Managers of the Montrose Royal Lunatic Asylum (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1837), p.229.

17 A. Scull, The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain 1700-1900 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), p.152.

18 One such contemporary account, given by Mrs E. Epps, of her visit to High Beech Asylum c.1840 describes many of the points highlighted in the quotations above, such as attractive, airy surroundings; individual treatment and concern; forbearance and the moral coercion possible only amongst a small number of patients. See page 148 of this thesis.

19 For example see A. Foss and K. Trick, St Andrews Hospital: the First One Hundred and Fifty Years (1838-1988) (Cambridge: Granta, 1989), p.28.

20 See P. Faithfull, 'Why was John Clare Locked Away?' unpublished MA. thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London, 1994, pp.40-41,55.

21 See L. D. Smith 'To Cure those Afflicted with the Disease of Insanity: Thomas Bakewell and Spring Vale Asylum', History of Psychiatry, 4 (1993), pp.107-127.

22 Allen, Classification, pp.34-35.

23 Ibid. p.47.

24 Diary of the Late John Epps, ed. E. Epps (London and Edinburgh, 1875) [n.pub], pp.237-238.

25 Allen, Classification, p.50.

26 The concept of balance is very strong in Allen's writing and is based on Aristotelian principles. The humoural approach to medicine saw health attained through maintaining the balance of humours in the body (Phlegm, Blood, Cholera and Black Bile) The same concept was applied to the human temperaments of which the four (sanguine, melancholic, choleric and phlegmatic), when held in balance produce a healthy personality. Phrenology too was based on finding and maintaining a healthy balance in the development of the cerebral organs.

27 Allen, Classification, p.104.

28 J. E. Esquirol, Mental Maladies: A Treatise on Insanity, ed. E. K. Hunt (trans. from the French) [n.pub] (Philadelphia, 1845), p.1, wrote: 'What reflections engage the mind of the philosopher, who turning aside from the tumult of the world, makes a circuit of a house for the insane. He finds there the same ideas, the same errors, the same passions, the same misfortunes, that elsewhere prevail. It is the same world but its distinctive characters are more noticeable; its features more marked; its colours more vivid; its effects more striking because man there displays himself in all his nakedness; dissimulating not his thoughts, nor concealing his defects, lending not to his passion seductive charms, not to his vices deceitful appearances.' There are other texts which directly oppose Allen's ideas about the mad seeing the madness in others, and the effect on the mad of the company they keep. It has to be emphasised that Allen only saw this as useful with early or incipient cases, still capable of reasoning and changing.

J. Conolly, An Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity. With Suggestions for the Better Protection and Care of the Insane (London: John Taylor, 1830), pp.30-31: 'No one in his senses will believe, that a man whose mind is disordered is likely in any stage of his disorder to derive benefit from being surrounded by men whose mental faculties are obscured [...] and who present to him, in place of models of sound mind, reasonableness and judicious conversation, every specimen of folly, of melancholy and extravagant madness.'

This reasoning led Conolly to advise against treating the insane in asylums. But by 1847 he had changed his mind and wrote in favour of asylum treatment and presumably might have withdrawn the above statement.

'Moraliter', 'Letter to the Editor', *Lancet*, 1 (23 January 1841) p.630:

'This then is the first great change I would make in the present system of ordinary private asylums, for the higher classes. Let not the patient be entrusted to keepers or to nurses. Let them not associate with such at any time as companions; for be assured when the mind is weakened by disease and so situated, it will surely fall to the standard of those around it [...] surround them above all by a society of persons superior, if possible, to what they themselves have been.'

29 An exception was Dr Maximilian Jacobi at the Sieburgh Institute. See his book, Op.Cit. On the Construction and Management of Hospitals for the Insane, ed. J. Kitching, p.21 and the comments by Samuel Tuke in the introduction to the book p.xii. Jacobi favours separation of idiots into their own care in contrast to Allen's approach of mixing them with other classes of patients.

30 This and the two previous quotations: Allen, Classification, pp.49-53.

31 Allen, Dutton, p.137.

32 Ibid. p.66.

33 Information from Essex County Record Office, 'Copies of Minutes of Visitors of Houses Licensed for the Reception of Insane Persons in the County of Essex and of Annual Reports under 2 and 3 Wm.4th Cap.107': Elizabeth Carter ran away on 3 September 1843 and was brought back after 3 hours. Francis Smith escaped on 8 July 1844 and was brought back two days later. John Clare absconded in July 1841 and never returned.

34 Later other asylums were to use parole. An example is the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum which was opened in 1838. Clare was allowed parole. If he misbehaved it was withdrawn. He finally lost this privilege altogether when a member of the public gave him alcohol. The loss of parole caused him

enormous suffering as is shown in Foss and Trick, St Andrews Hospital, pp.135-137.

35 S. Tuke, Description of the Retreat: An Institution Near York for Insane Persons of the Society of Friends: Containing an Account of its Origin and Progress, The Modes of Treatment, and a Statement of Cases with an Elevation and Plans of the Building (York and Philadelphia, 1813)[n.pub] p.93.

36 Allen, Classification, p.71.

37 Allen, Dutton, the affidavit of Mr St Julien Arabin, p.76.

38 Ibid. Affidavit of John Brown, surgeon of Waltham Abbey, pp.97-98.

39 Barnet, 'Matthew Allen MD', p.22.

40 Tuke, Description of the Retreat, p.93.

41 E. C. R. O, Court of Quarter Sessions, Q/ALp3 and The Times, 23 September 1844.

42 Son of the assassinated British primeminister Spencer Perceval.

43 Mackenzie, Psychiatry for the Rich, pp.70-74.

44 A further comparable weekly cost at a private asylum was at Laverstock House where Dr Finch's terms ranged from 2 to 10 guineas a week, proportioned to the comforts he allowed them. See Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell, ed. W. Beattie, 3 vols (London: Hall, Virtue, 1850), II, p.409.

45 Allen, Dutton, p.127 and the affidavit of George Kocher, p.39; and Mackenzie, Psychiatry for the Rich, p.70.

46 Allen, Dutton, p.128.

47 Mackenzie, Psychiatry for the Rich, p.70.

48 Allen, Dutton, p.52.

49. Tuke, Description of the Retreat, pp.111-112.

50 Ibid. p.115.

51 Allen, Classification, p.24.

52 Ibid. p.69.

53 Ibid. p.45.

54 Tuke, Description of the Retreat, p.128; Allen, Dutton, p.134.

55 Allen, Dutton, pp.99-100.

56 Allen, Classification, pp.30-31.

57 R. Porter, Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from Restoration to the Regency, (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.224 n.236:

'Andrew Scull points out in Museums of Madness p.68: "... the predecessor he [Tuke] most acknowledges is Locke. His emphasis throughout is on the restoration of 'Reason' so as to 'render to her the most essential assistance in the recovery of her lawful throne.'" Allen too quoted Locke, see chapter seven, p.226

58 The small numbers of patients and individualisation of treatment at this period comes as close to Freudian methods as it ever did. However the encouragement to suppress fear, rage etc, rather than uncover the psychological causes behind their manifestation, highlights the lack of understanding of the psyche at that time. See also: R. Porter, 'All Madness for Writing: John Clare and the Asylum', in John Clare In Context, eds. Hugh Haughton, Adam Phillips, Geoffrey Summerfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 259-278 (pp.266-267).

59 Tuke, Description of the Retreat, p.151.

60 M. Foucault, Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason (trans.) Richard Howard. (Abridged.). (London: Tavistock, 1967), p.243.

61 For an excellent rebuttal of Foucault's views and his specific criticisms of Tuke and Pinel see: K. Jones and A. J. Fowles, 'Foucault the excavator', Ideas of Institutions: Analyzing the Literature of Long-term Care and Custody (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp.27-46.

62 Foucault, Madness and Civilization, p.265.

63 'Foucault', The Concise Encyclopaedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers, eds. J O. Urmson and Jonathan Rée (London: Unwin Hyman, 1991), p.112: Foucault taught: 'Freedom is a practice which can never be made safe by institutional guarantees.'

64 The Later Poems of John Clare 1837-1864, eds. E. Robinson and D. Powell, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), I, Childe Harold, p.48:

Bid earth and its delusions pass away,  
But leave the mind, as its creator, free

65 Encyclopaedia of Western Philosophy, eds. Urmson and Rée, p.112.

66 *Ibid.* p.112.

67 Jones and Fowles, Ideas of Institutions, p.37.

68 J. Haslam, Observations on Madness and Melancholy (London: J. Callow, 1809), p. 236, in Allen, Classification, p.147.

69 See 'Dr John Haslam', in Scull, Hervey and Mackenzie, Masters of Bedlam, pp.10-47.

70 Allen quotes Hallaran, for example in 'Cases of Insanity' — see chapter III above. It is noted in Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry 1535-1860, eds. R. Hunter and I. Macalpine (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.871 that Hallaran was the one of only a few alienists ever quoted by W. C. Ellis.

71 D. H. Tuke, Chapters in the History of the Insane in the British Isles (London: Kegan Paul & Co, 1882) p.398.

72 W. S. Hallaran MD, Practical Observations on the Causes and Cure of Insanity, 2nd edn. (Cork, 1818), p.8.

73 Allen, Classification, pp.46-47.

74 Hallaran, Practical Observations, p.143. Though baths here are referred to as being legitimately used to calm a patient, shower baths were sometimes used to shock or punish a patient. They could be abused as much as mechanical restraints. The subject became one of great contention. See A. Digby, Madness, Morality and Medicine: A Study of The York Retreat, 1796-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.76

75 *Ibid.* p.69.

76 Ibid.p.92.

77 John Reid MD, Essays on Hypochondriasis and other Nervous Affections (London, 1821), [n.pub] pp.305, 309.

78 We have an instance of Allen falling into this very error in his treatment of John Clare. It can be postulated that Allen's treatment of John Clare was initially very successful. Then, for reasons, which will be discussed in the following chapter, when Clare should have been sent home Allen kept him too long in his asylum. At this point Clare developed a variety of delusions, because he began to lose hope of being cured and going home, and developed a fixed idea that his friends had utterly deserted him. It could also be said that Clare became bored with his asylum life and escaped into fantasies. Clare clung to his delusions developed at that time for the rest of his life. Efforts to remove them by the staff at Northampton Lunatic Asylum completely failed. If Clare was not mad when he entered High Beech Asylum he may well have been monomaniac when he absconded.

79 For a detailed study of the career of John Mayo see Mackenzie, Psychiatry for the Rich, pp.79-91.

80 M. Allen, Cases of Insanity: with Medical, Moral and Philosophical Observations and Essays upon them (London: George Swire, 1831) p.75.

81 Allen, Classification, p.79: 'Though exercise is the most powerful means of withdrawing the determination of the nervous energy and blood from the head, and distributing them properly through the whole system, and thus combining a mental and physical power of diversion to the train of thoughts which injuriously occupy and produce a destructive fire in the mind, fatal to its existence ...' etc.

82 Mackenzie, Psychiatry for the Rich, p.81.

83 W. A. F. Browne commends two asylums in Naples, in The Asylum as Utopia: W. A. F. Browne and the mid-Nineteenth Century Consolidation of Psychiatry, ed. A. Scull (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991) p.227. These asylums had been described by Nathaniel Parker Willis in his book Pencilings By The Way (1st edn. London, 1835) (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1942). Therefore it seems probable that Allen had read Willis's book.

84 M. Allen, Devotional Lectures on the Graces, Purity, Strength and Happiness of the Christian Character, 2nd edn (London: George Swire, 1931), pp.317-321.

85 Allen, Cases of Insanity p.74-75.

86 M. Allen, 'On Chemical Philosophy,' 7 essays, The Philosophical Magazine, 52 (1818), pp.56-57.

87 Samuel Tuke's diary in Samuel Tuke: His Life Work and Thoughts, ed. Charles Tylor (London: Headly Brothers, 1900), p.220: 'Aunt Esther remembered going home the same day from Oswald Allen's, where she and Aunt Maria had been taking tea.'

88 Ibid. pp.81-82.

89 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, p.298.

90 The Northampton Library, 'The John Clare Collection', Letters from M. Allen to C. Redding, April 1841, no.51.

91 Hunter and Macalpine, Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry, p.870.

For Ellis's private life see H. W. Ellis, Our Doctor: Or Memorials of Sir W. C. E. (London: Seeler, Jackson & Halliday, 1868),

L. D. Smith, 'Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody: Public Lunatic Asylums in Early Nineteenth Century England, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999), pp.104-105.

L. Ashworth, Our House, (Wakefield: Private Publication); also the relevant papers for Hanwell Asylum at the Greater London Record Office.



92 Hunter and Macalpine, *Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry*, p.871.

93 Ashworth, *Stanley Royd Hospital*, p.31.

94 W. C. Ellis, *A Treatise on the Nature, Symptoms, Causes and Treatment of Insanity with Practical Observations on Lunatic Asylums and a Description of The Pauper Lunatic Asylum for the County Of Middlesex at Hanwell With a Detailed Account of Its Management* (London: Holdsworth, 1838), pp.6, 9.

95 Harriet Martineau was one who recognised and commented favourably on the Ellis's parental attitude to their patients, see H. W. Ellis, *Our Doctor*, pp.36-37.

96 Hunter and Macalpine, *Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry*, p.871.

97 *Ibid.* p.820.

98 'John Conolly: A Victorian Psychiatric Career', in *Social Order/Mental Disorder, Anglo-American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective*, ed. A. Scull (London: Routledge, 1989), 162-209 (p.163).

99 Allen, *Classification*, pp.30-31.

100 L. D. Smith, 'Cure, comfort and Safe Custody' p.69 writes:  
'He (Ellis) had a strong belief in the correctness of his paternalist approach and in his therapeutic system built around the twin philosophies of the work ethic and religious devotion.'

101 John Conolly M. D. *An Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity: with Suggestions for the Better Protection and Care of The Insane.* (London: John Taylor, 1830).

102 Parliamentary Papers, 'Annual Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy', 1844.  
Scull, *Social Order*, p.192: 'The Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy [...] exhibited rather more ambivalence about the value of non-restraint but 2 years later the new Lunacy Commission had thrown aside such doubts, and non-restraint became the ruling orthodoxy of British Asylumdom.'

103 R. Gardiner Hill, *Lunacy: Its Past and Present* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1870), p.51.

104 Scull, *Social Order*, p.193 n.

105 *Ibid.* p.192, a quotation from *The Morning Chronicle*, 5 October 1843.

106 *Ibid.* p.192.

107 In Scull, *Social Order*, p.164 he writes 'These are judgements that historians have for the most part been content to echo, crediting Conolly with completing the work begun by Pinel and Tuke.' For an example of this see J. Hopton, 'Prestwich Hospital in the Twentieth Century: A Case Study of Slow and Uneven Progress in the Development of Psychiatric Care', *History of Psychiatry* 10:3 39 (September 1999), 349-369 (p. 363), where Conolly's name is linked in just such a way to Samuel Tuke's and others who 'emphasised the rehabilitative ideal' in the history of psychiatry.

108 Scull, *Social Order*, pp. 162-209.

109 Scull, *Social Order*, p.192: 'Conolly's recognition had a symbolic significance for the Victorian bourgeoisie that extended far beyond its contribution to the welfare of the mad. Confronted by the threats of Chartism [...] the all-but-inescapable evidence of the devastating impact of industrial capitalism [...] authors of the New Poor Law, assailed by its critics as the very embodiment of inhumanity and meanness of spirit, the Victorian governing classes could at least find a source of pride in the generous and kindly treatment now accorded to the mad.'

110 J. Conolly, The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane (London: John Churchill, 1847), p.28.

111 Akihito Suzuki, 'The Politics and Ideology of Non-Restraint: The Case of the Hanwell Asylum', Medical History, 39 (1995), 1-17 (pp.13-14). For additional reassessment of Conolly's work see also: E.M. Burrows, 'Enigmatic Icon: A Biographical Reappraisal of a Victorian Alienist, John Conolly MD, D.C.L., 1794-1866' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford Brookes University, 1999.)

112 L. D. Smith, 'Behind Closed Doors, Lunatic Asylum Keepers, 1800-1860', Social History of Medicine, I, 3 (1988), 301-327 (p.327), comments about the dilemma in which attendants were to find themselves in institutions such as Hanwell: 'The attendants were likely to be involved in the maintenance of a system that promoted order and regularity ultimately for their own sake rather than for any originally declared therapeutic intent.'

113 Suzuki, Ideology of Non-Restraint, p. 14.

114 Suzuki, Ideology of Non-Restraint, pp.14-15 and Greater London Record Office H11/HLL/A7/1 p.70.

115 Suzuki, Ideology of Non-Restraint, p.15.

116 Ibid. p.17.

Of Conolly, A. Scull says: 'His own role at Hanwell was diminished and soon to end [...] He was not disenchanted with administering an ever-larger warehouse for the unwanted. His resignation was not a protest at an overcrowded establishment [...] it derived from administrative changes that threatened his own authority and status.' Social Order, p.197.

117 Digby, Madness, Morality and Medicine, p.76.

118 Scull, Social Order, p.186.

119 'Prichard, Esquirol, Allen, Ellis, Ferrarese, Greco, Farr, Crowther, etc. On Insanity', in the British and Foreign Medical Review, 7 (1839), pp.46-47

120 Ibid. p.47.

121 E. M. Burrows, 'Enigmatic Icon', p.190, n9.

122 Clare: The Critical Heritage, ed. M. Storey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p.256

123 Allen, Classification, pp.67-69,74-75,79.

124 E.C.R.O. Q/ALp7.

125 The Northamptonshire Library, J. C. Collection, 51.

126 In Scull, Social Order, p.190.the references to the letters in *The Lancet* are somewhat confusing, which makes them difficult to locate. Scull notes: 'There were some fifty contributors [...] to this debate during the first six months of 1840.' In fact in 1840 the debate was slow to get going. The bulk of the debate was during the last three months of 1840 and the early months of 1841.

127 Both quotations from The Times are in Scull, Social Order, p.188.

128 Lancet, 1 (1839-1840), p.732.

129 Ibid.p.776.

130 Dr C. C. Corsellis has remained almost unheard of in the history of nineteenth century lunacy, due to

the mistaken belief, perpetuated in such works as A. Scull's A Most Solitary Affliction, and R. Cooter's The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science, that Dr Disney Alexander succeeded William Ellis as superintendent at The West Riding Asylum in 1831. Alexander was never on the full-time staff of that asylum but did serve as visiting physician. Corsellis was appointed successor to Ellis and served at the West Riding Asylum as superintendent from 1831 to 1853. Virtually nothing was otherwise known about his life. See Ashworth, p.65. More recently his work has been noticed in L. D. Smith, 'Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody'.

131 Lancet 1 (1839-1840) p.962 and 2 (1840) p.248.

132 *Looker-on* has since been identified as John Adams, a Hanwell governor and supporter of Charles Tulk. *Philanthropos* is thought to have been Thomas Hodgkin, Dean of Carlisle. See Suzuki, *Ideology of Non-Restraint*, p. 10.

133 '13th Annual Report of the Nottingham General Lunatic Asylum,' Lancet, 1 (12 December 1840), pp.407-410

134 A. Stilwell, 'On the Treatment of the Insane,' Lancet, 1 (11 January 1841), pp.646-648.

135 [T.Wakley], 'To Correspondents,' Lancet, 1 (9 January 1841), p.567.

136 *Moraliter*, 'Letter to the Editor', Lancet, 1 (23 January 1841), p.630-631.  
For a fuller description of life at Denham Park Asylum, with parallels similar to High Beech See E. Rickman, Madness, or, Maniac's Hall (London, 1841),[n.pub] pp.296-297.

137 The Northamptonshire Library, J.C. Collection, Letter from Allen to Redding, 51.

138 R.B. Martin, Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart (London: Faber, 1983), p.254.

139 Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle, 24 vols eds. C. R. Sanders and K. Fielding (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1970), XII, pp.239-240 and XI, p.112.

## CHAPTER VI

1 M. Allen, letter to The Times, 21 June 1840.

2 For these descriptions and the quotations following see Allen, *Classification*, pp.36-47.

3 Allen, Dutton, affidavit by Mr Charles Harris, surgeon of Fenchurch Street, London, 29-34 (p.30).

4 E. C. R. O, 'Minutes of the Visitors appointed by the Court of Quarter Sessions, Dr Allen's Asylum,' October 1841, Q/ALp7.

5 E. C. R. O, 'Minutes of the Visitors ', January 1839, Q/ALp7, Mrs Katherine Heron.

6 Allen, *Classification*, p.69-70.

7 Although Allen has been described as some one who ran his asylum along phrenological lines, in his textbook he makes little mention of using phrenology at High Beech. This comment, 'to bring the better parts of his mind into life was a great difficulty', indicates, however, that he had phrenology in mind when treating this patient. At about the same time that Allen was treating him, Dr Franz Gall was writing: 'The great point always is to divert the attention of the patient from the object of his insanity, by fixing it upon other objects'. F. Gall, 'On the Function of the Brain And Each of its Parts', trans. Winslow Lewis, Jr., ed. Nahum Capen (Boston: Phrenological Library, 1835) II, p.284, in R. Cooter, 'Phrenology and the British Alienists, ca.1825-1845', 58-104, in Madhouses, Mad-doctors and Madmen: the Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Era, ed. A. Skull (London: Athlone, 1981), p.78. Cooter goes on to say: 'By providing a healthy environment with rational amusements and occupations individually designed, the

organs could be restored to their proper balance'. Here we see Allen's practical use of this theory.

8 Diary of the Late John Epps, ed. E. Epps (London and Edinburgh, 1875) [n.pub] p.236.

9 Allen, Classification, p.34.

10 Allen, Dutton, affidavit by Basil Montagu, barrister-at-law, pp.77-78.

11 T. Carlyle, Reminiscences, ed. C. E. Norton, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1887), II, p.126.

12 Ibid. II, p.126.

13 Ibid. II, p.130.

14 Ibid. II, p.128.

15 Jane Welsh Carlyle: a New Selection of her Letters, ed. Trudy Bliss (London: Victor Gollancz, 1949), pp. 38-39.

16 Byron: Selected Letters and Journals, ed. Peter Gunn (London: Penguin Books, 1984), p.130.

17 The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Campbell, ed. J. Logie Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), Preface.

18 Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell, ed. W. Beattie MD, 2nd edn. 3 vols (London: Hall, Virtue & Co, 1850), II, p.401.

19 C. Redding, Literary Reminiscences and Memoirs of Thomas Campbell, 2 vols (London, 1860),[n.pub] I, 235-241 (p.237). Further page numbers are given after quotations in the text.

20 Beattie, Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell, II, p.402.

21 For details concerning Warburton refer to Chapter 3. n8 and n9.

22 Beattie, Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell, II, p.402.

23 Ibid.p.402. For discussion of the care of the mad in their own homes see also chapter 5.n9.

24 Beattie, Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell, II, p.408. For the full account of Campbell's visit to Laverstock House for the first time see, II pp.404-414. Page numbers are give after quotations in the text.

25 For the practice of patients who hunted while living in asylums, see also C. Mackenzie, Psychiatry for the Rich: a History of Ticehurst Private Asylum 1792-1919 (London: Macmillan, 1992), p.74.

26 Holborn Local Studies Library (A28) Beattie's Memoranda 1824, p.18, ST2/1B/8.

27 Beattie, Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell, III, p.32.

28 Redding, Reminiscences, pp.240-241.

29 The Times, 23 September 1844.

30 Redding, Reminiscences, p.241.

31 For the account of this visit see, Beattie, Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell, III, pp. 246-247.

32 Dr Alexander Morison advised the separating of various types of lunatics and warned against putting together: 'Those who may strengthen each other's delusions'. A. Morison MD, Cases of Mental Disease:

With Practical Observations on Medical Treatment, for the Use of Students (London: Longman and S. Highley, 1828), p.10. This seems to have been the case with Thom and his companions.

33 For further discussion on the causes and diagnosis of John Clare's illness and theories of genius and insanity see, R. Porter, A Social History of Madness (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987) pp.60-65 and P. Faithfull, 'Why was John Clare Locked away?' unpublished MA thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London, 1994, pp.29-33, 43-47.

34 Allen, Classification, p.29.

35 M. Allen, 'Letter to The Times', 21 June 1840.

36 The artist J. B. Wandesforde visited Clare at High Beech and was given a number of pieces written by the poet since he had been in the asylum. Wandesforde subsequently took these poems with him to the United States where they exchanged hands until eight were published in the *Overland Monthly* in February 1873. Redding published twenty in his *English Journal*, three more are in the Northampton Reference Library. *Childe Harold* consists of twenty-seven poems and ballads and *Don Juan* of three. Part of the latter was completed after returning home to Northborough.

37 A. Foss and K. Trick, St Andrew's Hospital, Northampton: the First One Hundred and Fifty Years (Cambridge: Granta, 1989), p.132.

38 Northampton Public Library, the John Clare Collection, 30.

39 Poems of John Clare's Madness, ed. G. Grigson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949), 'A walk in the Forest' p.54

40 The Later Poems of John Clare 1837-1864, eds. E. Robinson and D. Powell, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), I, 'Don Juan' p.95. For more poems of the forest see 'London versus Epping Forest', p.28; 'The Botanist's Walk', pp.35-36 etc.

41 Ibid. 'Sighing for Retirement', p.19.

42 At least Clare never again complained of 'the Blue Devils' being his 'constant companion' or his insides feeling 'sinking and dead' or a sensation in his head 'like cold water creeping all about' as he had to Hesse and others on numerous occasions — See The Letters of John Clare, eds. J. W. & A. Tibble (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), pp.136,151.

43 British Museum MSS Dept, Eggerton Papers, vol.VI, 2250 fols. 12 and 13

44 Ibid. fol. 12.

45 Northampton Public Library, the J. C. Collection, 30

46 Robinson and Powell, Later Poems, 'Don Juan', p.99. All further quotations from 'Don Juan' and 'Childe Harold' are from this publication and the page numbers are in brackets in the text.

47 Eggerton Papers, vol.VI, 2250, fol. 21.

48 See The Prose of John Clare, eds J. W. & A. Tibble (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), pp.231-233.

49 E.C.R.O, Q/ALp7. See 'Visitors Minutes' for January and June 1841, when the total number of patients was 52 — the highest amount Allen ever accommodated. For the first time Fair Mead House was entirely given over to patients. See also E.C.R.O, April 1841 Census, HO/107/341 fol 3.

50 See note in Visitors Minutes for 30 December 1843.

51 John Wood, gentleman, aged 40, was admitted on 28 February 1833. He was discharged 'recovered', into the care of his brother on 14 August 1837.

James Wood, aged 40, and married, who worked as a clerk in the Exchequer Office, was admitted in September 1835 and discharged 'cured', in September 1838. He was re-admitted in April 1839 and remained in the asylum.

52 R. B. Martin, Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart (London: Faber, 1983), p.254.

53 The Letters of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, eds. C. Lang and E. Shannon jnr, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), I, p.216.

54 British Library, 'John Clare, the Peasant Poet', 11647e.l(126).

55 'Our gossip Column', Athenaum, 27 June 1840.

56 J. W. & A. Tibble, John Clare: A Life (London: Joseph, 1972), pp.342-343.

57 Northampton Public Library, J. C. Collection, 27.

58 G. MacLennan, Lucid Interval: Subjective Writing and Madness in History (London, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), p.136.

59 Eggerton Papers, vol.VI, 2250, fol. 15

60 See for example the letter from a Mr Brightoren of Norwich, Eggerton Papers, vol.VI, 2250, fol.9, who obviously had no understanding of Clare's plight, despite the press reports. Such people must have constantly plagued Clare and Allen. Allen could well have been taken on a wild goose chase by such a 'well wisher'.

61 Redding visited High Beech in early April 1841. There are 3 accounts of this visit:

1. In English Journal, 20 (15 May 1841), 305-309; 22 (29 May 1841), 340-343.
2. C. Redding, Fifty Year's Recollections: Literary and Personal, 3 vols (London: Charles J. Skeet, 1858), III, pp.216-217.
3. C. Redding, Past Celebrities Whom I Have Known, 2 vols (London, 1865), [n.pub] II, pp.132-133. Allen, having missed Redding's visit wrote to him on 21 April and called on him in London soon afterwards. He wrote to him again on 25 May. The two letters from Allen to Redding are in The Northampton Public Library, J. C. Collection, 51.

62 Clare: The Critical Heritage, ed. M. Storey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p.254.

63 E. Blunden, Keats's Publisher: a Memoir of John Taylor, 1781-1864 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), p.209.

64 *Ibid.* p.224.

65 Dr Darling, a society physician from Russell Square in London, known to Taylor, treated Clare between 1824 and 1837. He thought Clare was eating too much rich food and advised him to cut down on the pies and puddings. Allen by contrast realised immediately that Clare was starving. See J. F. Clarke MRCs, Autobiographical Sketches of the Medical Profession (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1874), pp.123-124. Dr Fenwick Skrimshire of Peterborough attended Clare for many years and signed both certificates of Clare's madness before he entered Allen's Asylum and before he went to the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum. See Northampton Public Library the J. C. Collection, 50 and A. Tibble 'John Clare's Doctors', Charles Lamb Bulletin, 4 (1973-1974), pp.1-8.

The Reverend Charles. Mossop was Clare's local vicar from 1817 to 1833. Though kind to Clare he was interfering and officious, uncertain how to treat a rural genius. His paternalism galled Clare who gave him unwilling deference. The Bishop's wife was Mrs Marion Marsh, of German origin and married to the Bishop of Peterborough. She was a true friend to Clare, entertaining him in her home, sending him books and other gifts. But like Mrs Emmerson and Lord Radstock, his other London friends, she was inclined to

moralise and send him sermons to read for his own good. Roy Porter sums up Clare's reaction to years of doffing his cap to his superiors: 'For years the poet had had to mind his Ps and Qs; composing while glancing over his shoulder at his patrons and public, his collective super-ego. Now amidst outpourings of love for nature and for his two wives a new strain showed in his verse. The pent up anger, resentments and frustrations of the years flared out in satire and bawdy'. 'All Madness for Writing: John Clare in the Asylum', in John Clare in Context, eds. Hugh Haughton, Adam Phillips, Geoffrey Summerfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 259-278 (p.263).

66 Northampton Public Library, the J. C. Collection, 8.

67 Storey, Clare: The Critical Heritage, p.256.

68 Eggerton Papers, vol I, 2250.

69 Quoted in A. Foss and K. Trick, St Andrew's Hospital, p.137.

70 Robinson and Powell, Later Poems, I, Untitled Poem, p.37.

71 After the Tennysons moved to Kent there was a constant correspondence between the women in the two families. The Tennyson women tried to believe the best they could about Allen for as long as possible as there was a mutual desire to prolong their friendship. See Tennyson Research Centre, Matthew Allen to Alfred, 17 Aug 1840, 7706: 'Mary Ann I believe is writing to your sister. Mrs and Miss Allen beg their kind regards'; and J. O. Waller, A Circle of Friends (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1986), p.126, the letter from Mary Tennyson to Mrs Allen dated 21 July, 1842, referring to Alfred's exaggeration of the business problems due to his fidgety state.

72 C. Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1949), p.150.

73 Martin, Tennyson, p.138: 'Septimus at fifteen appeared to be "a clever sharp fellow", who was well suited to being articulated to a solicitor. Nothing that was suggested to him worked out, his considerable poetic talent came to nothing, and until his death[at the age of 51] he spent his time wandering vaguely in and out of the lives of his brothers and sister.'

74 Tennyson Research Centre, Septimus to Alfred Tennyson May 4th, 1840, 7719.

75 For a comparable case at The York Retreat, where attendant Samuel Smith was first dismissed from his post in 1804 but was still working there in 1820 see, A. Digby, Madness, Morality and Medicine: A Study of The York Retreat, 1796-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.153.

76 The Later Poems of John Clare (eds.) E. Robinson and D. Powell, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), I, 'A Walk on High Beach, Loughton', p.27

77 Oswald Allen's Memoirs, pp.8,263,282,335.

On pages 335 and 282 of the Memoirs Oswald refers to the ill treatment of his sister Ann Stockdale by their brother Edward and her death in 1820. This has been taken as an error and should read 'Jane'. According to the genealogies in the Oswald Allen's Memoirs, and others held by the family, Jane Allen (b.1779) was married to William Stockdale and in 1804 had two children, Jane and William. If she is in fact 'Ann' in these references, she later had two more children. In 1811 William Stockdale was 'still living under the same roof with her' and it was she who died in 1820. Oswald paid some money regularly for the maintenance of her four children. References to Matthew's older sister Ann are few. In 1804 when she was 27 she was unmarried. In 1811 she was living at Burtsett not far from Gayle. There is no evidence to indicate that she ever married.

78 Martin, Tennyson, p. 253.

79 M. Thorn, Tennyson (London: Little, Brown, 1992), p.182.

80 See Martin, Tennyson, p.150: 'It is only too easy to see that in his constant turning to the past and in his

refusal or inability to take on the responsibilities of a man there was something fairly immature. [...] He sought [...] for someone to take care of him, to give an organisation to his life that he was incapable of providing himself'

81 C. Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, p.184.

82 T.R.C. 17 August 1840, 7706.

83 Martin, Tennyson, p.253.

84 C. Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, p.185.

85 Ibid. p.186.

86 Epps, Diary, pp.236-241.

87 All the periods that Alfred Tennyson spent at High Beech Asylum fell between dates for the quarterly Visitors' inspections as recorded in the Visitors' Book.

88 Waller, p.109.

89 On 15 February 1841 Edward FitzGerald wrote to W. H. Thompson (Greek professor and Master of Trinity College, Cambridge): 'Spedding and I abuse each other about Shakespeare occasionally, a subject on which you must know that he has lost his conscience, if ever he had any. For what did Dr Allen [...] say when he felt Spedding's head? Why that all his bumps were so tempered that there was no merit in his sobriety — then what would have been the use of a conscience to him? QED.' Letters of Edward FitzGerald, ed. W. A. Wright, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1894), I, p.102.

90 F. B. Pinion, A Tennyson Chronology (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 34-35.

91 The Cambridge Guide to English Literature, ed M. Stapleton (London: Book Club Associates, 1983), p.576.

92 Tennyson's Maud: A Definitive Edition, ed. Susan Shatto (London: Athlone, 1986), p.209.

## **CHAPTER VII**

1 Essex County Record Office, 'Copies of Minutes of Visitors of Houses Licensed for the Reception of Insane Persons in the County of Essex and of Annual Reports under 2 and 3 Wm.4th Cap.107', Q/ALp7: George Orgar aged 9 admitted July 1836, Anne Ruston 9 years, admitted March 1838 and Edwin Silvester aged 7 admitted April 1842. The first two were discharged 'cured' but the latter's condition was not stated.

2 E. C. R. O. April 1841 census, HO 107/341 fol.3.

3 York Reference Library, Oswald Allen's Memoirs, 9Y20/12631, pp.342,356,364.

4 Ibid. pp.350,352,356.

5 The quotations which follow, with page numbers marked in brackets in the text, are from M. Allen, 'On the Importance of Early Education' in Lectures on the Temper and Spirit of the Christian Religion (London: Baldwin & Co, 1820), pp.283-362.

6 For Locke's views in full see, The Educational Writings of John Locke: a Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes, ed. James L. Axtell (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

7 For the eighteenth century evangelical view of education see P. Sangster, Pity My Simplicity: The Evangelical Revival and the Religious Education of Children, 1738-1800 (London: Epworth Press, 1963),



especially pp.24-30.

8 Port Royalists were members of a seventeenth century Jansenist community, who lived just outside Paris. It was noted for its logicians and educators.

9 Herrnhut was the Moravian community which settled on the estates of Count Zinzendorf in Saxony in the 1730s. They practised the educational principles taught by the Moravian, John Komensky (1592-1670) which included the idea that understanding and not coercion was the key to learning, also that teaching should be built on the sense experiences of the child. In 1657 Komensky wrote *The Great Didactic*, which had a lasting influence throughout Europe.

10 Phillip Doddridge, a dissenting minister opened an academy and a charity school in Northampton in 1737.

11 Sangster, *Pity My Simplicity*, p.30.

12 M. and R. Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 2 vols (London, 1798), [n.pub].

13 Discussing imagination and education, William Godwin, wrote: 'Without imagination there can be no genuine ardour in any pursuit, or for any acquisition, and without imagination there can be no genuine morality, no profound feeling of other men's sorrow, no ardent and persevering anxiety for their interests.' 'An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice' (London, 1793), II, in M. Gaull, *English Romanticism: The Human Context* (New York, London: Norton, 1988), p.65.

14 For critical examples in literature of the utilitarian system of education see 'Mansfield Park', in *Jane Austen: The Complete Novels* (London: Guild, 1984), p. 395 and C. Dickens, *Hard Times*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

15 See M. Allen, *Essay on the Classification of the Insane* (London: John Taylor, 1837), pp.146-147: 'The greater number of those who lose the power over their own minds are from among those who have been unaccustomed at an early stage of their existence to exercise a salutary control over their feelings and habits'.

16 For a summary of Rousseau's theories see D. Grylls, *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (London: Faber, 1978), pp.31-35.

17 Captain Basil Hall, *Account of Discovery to the West Coast of Corea and The Great Loo Choo Island* (London: John Murray, 1818), p.212.

18 G. Combe, *Essays on Phrenology: or an Inquiry into the Principles and Utility of the System of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim, and into the Objections Made Against it* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1819), pp.321-322.

19 A. Richardson, *Literature, Education And Romanticism, Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.50.

20 As here with children, so with the insane, it was often said they were to be tamed like animals. This concept was expressed as an example of the use of coercion linked with the threat of cruelty, see A. Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), p.100. Note, that here it is clearly linked with kindness.

21 Allen, *Classification*, p.47.

22 For example W. Wordsworth, '*The Prelude: or, Growth of a Poet's Mind*' (Text of 1805) Edited from *The Manuscripts with an Introduction and Notes by Ernest De Selincourt*, 2nd edn. corrected by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), book V, lines 341-346:

O! give me once again the wishing cap

Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat  
 Of Jack the Giant Killer, Robin Hood,  
 And Sabra in the forest with St. George!  
 The child whose love is here at least doth reap,  
 One precious gain, that he forgets himself.

23 This is a single aspect of Allen's work which seems original to him. Other nineteenth century writers on children fail to point out this need in them and approximate more to the traditional view of their being seen and not heard.

24 'Application' is strongly emphasised in the art of homiletics, as vital to any sermon.

25 B. Montagu, Collection of Opinions on the Punishment of Death, 3 vols (London, 1816), [n.pub] III, p.189.

26 Allen, Classification, pp.146-147.

27 Allen, Outlines of A Course Of Lectures On Chemical Philosophy (Edinburgh, Archibald Constable), 1819. 'Advertisement' p.3.

28 Allen, Classification, p.23.

29 The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopaedia, 2nd edn, ed. David Crystal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.348.

30 Allen, Classification, p.103.

Here once again Allen is seen to be following in the steps of Samuel Tuke. As pointed out by Roy Porter, Mind -Forg'd Manacles: a History of Madness in England from Restoration to the Regency (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.223 'Tuke wrote: "There is much analogy between the judicious treatment of children, and that of insane persons." (A Description of the Retreat p.150)'

## CHAPTER VIII

1 W. Addison, Epping Forest — its Literary and Historical Associations (London: J. M. Dent, 1945), p.177.

2 M. Allen, Allen Versus Dutton (London: George Swire, 1833), affidavit of William Sotheby, p.73.

3 Ibid. affidavit of J. C. Badeley, MD FRCP, p.99.

4 Ibid. affidavit of George Swire, p.62.

5 D. A. Wilson, Life of Thomas Carlyle (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. 1924), 6 vols 'Carlyle to The French Revolution,' 1826-1837, II, p.347. and R. B. Martin, Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart (London: Faber, 1983), p.170.

6 Allen, Dutton, p.5.

7 J. F. Clarke MRCS, Autobiographical Recollections of the Medical Profession (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1874), p.137.

8 Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson (Macmillan: London, 1949), p.186.

9 Edmund Blunden conjectures that someone at the London University mentioned to Taylor the excellent conditions under which the son of Thomas Campbell — part founder of the university — was restrained by Dr Matthew Allen, at High Beach in Epping. E Blunden, Keats's Publisher: a Memoir of John Taylor, 1781-1864 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), p.201.

10 The Northampton Public Library, The J. C. Collection, letter from Dr Matthew Allen to Cyrus Redding, 21 April 1841, 51.

11 Allen, Dutton, p.75.

12 The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson, 24 vols eds. C. Y. Lang and E. F. Shannon, jnr. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), I, p.197.

13 Later, in 1882, Clissold supported the publication of Swedenborg's posthumous work on the Brain. There were many churchmen who at this time became exceedingly interested in the works of Swedenborg, some remained clergymen all their lives; others left the Anglican Communion. Most, it seems like Allen, were concerned with the eighteenth century mystic's scientific ideas but were not completely reconciled to his theology, which was far from orthodox.

14 See this thesis, chapter IV, n61(final sentence).

15 Phrenological Journal and Miscellany, 'Notices' Vol.2 1823-1824.

16 M. Allen, Essay on the Classification of the Insane (London: John Taylor, 1837), p.133.

17 Allen, Dutton, p.55.

18 Ibid. p.46.

19 Ibid. Affidavit of John Brown, p.98.

20 Ibid. Affidavit of John Carr Badeley MD F.R.C.P. p.100.

21 Ibid. Affidavit of William Sotheby, p.74.

22 John Clare's Autobiographical Writings, ed. E. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.153.

23 J. W. & A. Tibble, John Clare: A Life (London: Joseph, 1972), p.358. The very same year that Clare made his escape a similar complaint was published by Edwin Rickman who had been a patient at Duddeston Hall private asylum in Staffordshire: 'Nothing is more calculated to disgust and to increase the excitement of a convalescent and sensitive mind than to be subject, to the low, and necessary ignorant talk of even the most civil, and for their station in life, the best informed of the class almost invariably chosen to perform the important duties of attendance and companionship'. E. Rickman, Madness, or Maniacs' Hall (London, 1841), p.219.

24 We do not know what the staff at High Beech Asylum were paid. For figures from comparative institutions and details of attendants and their duties see: A. Digby, 'A Hidden Dimension: The Asylum Attendant', in Madness, Morality and Medicine: A Study of The York Retreat, 1796-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.140-155. Also L. D. Smith, 'Behind Closed Doors, Lunatic Asylum Keepers, 1800-1860', Social History of Medicine, I, 3 (1988), 301-327 (pp.310,312).

25 The Dutton case highlights at least two changes of staff which aggravated the situation at the time. Mrs Davies, the Matron, who was making progress in developing clean habits in the patient, had to leave for personal reasons and Mrs Allen herself took charge of Mrs Dutton. The Dutton family requested that the female attendant named Cook, who cared for Mrs Dutton during her first spell of treatment at High Beech should attend her during her second stay. Cook however had left.

26 E.C.R.O, 1841 census for Waltham Holy Cross, HO 107/341 f.3.

27 For Allen's correspondence with Tennysons during November 1841 see pp. 243-244 of this thesis.

28 British Library MSS Department, Egerton Papers, 2250 f.21.

29 Lang and Shannon, *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, p.197. A footnote, regarding a letter from Allen to Alfred Tennyson in November 1841, reads: 'Allen's handwriting is awesome, and the text of this letter may be to some extent made not begotten'. The letter to Clare on 18 November 1841 is in Allen's hand and is neat and clear.

30 Here is a clear example of Allen's willingness to take voluntary boarders into the asylum without certification. See p.258.

31 E. Blunden, *Keats's Publisher: A Memoir of John Taylor, 1781-1864* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), p.209.

32 Tennyson Research Centre, Lincoln, No.7708. See also Sir Charles Tennyson and H. Dyson, *The Tennysons: Background to Genius* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p.152.

33 C. Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson*, London, 1949, p.186.

34 Tennyson and Dyson, *Background to Genius*, p.154.

35 From whom he had got this information it is not known but it supports Allen's contention that from the beginning he had had 'enemies' working against him.

36 See letter of Charles Turner to Charles d'Eyncourt Tennyson, October 1841, Lang and Shannon, *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, I, p.196.

37 Tennyson and Dyson, *Background to Genius*, p.153.

38 Lang and Shannon, *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, I, p.196.

39 Tennyson and Dyson, *Background to Genius*, p.155. Letter of Matthew Allen to Frederick Tennyson, 6 November, 1841. This is the only known evidence of Allen having a coal mine or shares in one.

40. This quote and the two previous are from the letter of Allen to Alfred Tennyson, November 1841, Lang and Shannon, *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, I, p.197.

41 This document is in the Tennyson Research Centre, amongst the Allen to Alfred Letters, unnumbered but dated March, 1842.

42 As early as November 1841 Allen writes to Alfred about 'giving the lie to all those who were suspicious' and in the summer of 1841 Alfred's uncle had already heard adverse rumours of Allen's scheme from a source outside the family. Any theories as to the cause of the collapse of the business must hold as a high priority an attempt by Allen's 'enemies' to ruin him. See also Allen to Frederick Tennyson, letter dated 4 March 1843: 'My suspicions of them are confirmed'. The meaning of this remark is not clear but it seems to refer to 'enemies' of some sort.

43 Lang and Shannon, *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, I, p.191.

44 Tennyson and Dyson, *Background to Genius*, p.156.

45 J. O. Waller, *A Circle of Friends* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1986), p.126.

46 M. Thorn, *Tennyson* (London: Little, Brown, 1992), pp.192-193.

47 Tennyson and Dyson, *Background to Genius*, p.157.

- 48 C. Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, p.198.
- 49 P.R.O.B4/50 Docket Book 1843-1846.
- 50 Holborn Local Studies Library (A/28)Beattie's Memoranda, ST2/1B/8.
- 51 Lang and Shannon, The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson, I, p.216.
- 52 Waller, A Circle of Friends, p.126.
- 53 Lang and Shannon, The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson, I, p.216.
- 54 C. Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, p.203.
- 55 R. B. Martin, Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart (London: Faber, 1983), p.154.
- 56 This and the following quotation: Tennyson Research Centre, letter of William Aldis Wright (of Trinity College, Cambridge) to Hallam Tennyson, 3 December 1893.
- 57 C. Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, p.187.
- 58 E.C.R.O. Minutes of the Visitors appointed by the Court of Quarter Sessions, Dr Allen's Asylum, 24 October 1843, Q/AL p7.
- 59 Ibid. Transcription of a letter from William Birkbeck.
- 60 Ibid. Patient List p.196.
- 61 Allen, Classification, p.25.
- 62 W. Parry Jones, The Trade In Lunacy: A Study of Private Madhouses in England in The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p.262.
- 63 Minutes of the Visitors, 25 June 1842. R. Hunter and I. Macalpine, Three Hundred Years Of Psychiatry 1535-1860 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.927
- 64 Allen, Classification, p.98.
- 65 Ibid. p.58.
- 66 All the information about this inquiry comes from The Times, 23 September 1844.
- 67 Holborn Local Studies Library (A/28) Beattie's Memoranda, ST2/1B/8.
- 68 C. Redding, Literary Reminiscences and Memoirs of Thomas Campbell, 2 vols (London, 1860),[n.pub] I, p.241.
- 69 E.C.R.O., Q/AL p9.
- 70 'Number of insane persons confined in Asylums, Licensed Houses etc' Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy 1847 etc.
- 71 R. Porter, The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present (London: Harper Collins, 1997), p.513, sums up the situation: 'By 1900 the optimism for curability with which the nineteenth century had opened had almost entirely run into the sands; the asylums were filled up with patients for whom cures were no longer expected. "We know a lot and can do little," commented Georg Dobrick, a German asylum doctor, in 1910. '

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