

*Sillwood, Brighton, July 5th, 1855.*

Dear Sir,—My attention has been called to a letter in the "Asylum Journal" for this month, by Dr. Wing, on "Forced Alimentation," a subject upon which the opinions of the medical world greatly differ, some of our highest authorities doubting its efficacy. I confess, after many years' practical experience, I doubt the propriety of its use in all cases where the patient refuses food, but that success has occasionally attended it there can be no question. I will instance a case. Some years since a clergyman was placed under my care; his general health was good, and his appetite equally so. In a short time, without any ostensible cause, he became morose in his manner, took a great antipathy to those who had charge of him, and ultimately refused his food. After the lapse of a few days we were compelled to resort to the stomach-pump. He submitted to the operation much better than I had anticipated; but when he found he had to go through the same process the following morning he gave in, asked that food might be brought him, and from that time till I ceased to be connected with the asylum, nearly two years later, continued to take even more than the usual quantity of aliment.

The expedient I had recourse to in another case, though equally successful, bears with it the stamp of romance. A lady, who was placed with me, was, or imagined herself, in love with an officer of rank in one of our cavalry regiments. She had known him some years previously in Dublin. At the time of her attack the regiment was in barracks, near where I was then living. The lady, in ignorance of this fact, suddenly refused all nourishment unless she could see Colonel ———. Finding every effort fail, and that she was gradually sinking, I obtained the sanction of her family, and called upon the Colonel, who at once acceded to my request, and having prepared a substantial luncheon, I introduced my poor patient into the room where the gentleman was sitting. At first she refused to recognise him, but in a few minutes she did so, and at his solicitation partook of a hearty meal, and though she afterwards occasionally evinced a disinclination to eat, it never gave us any serious uneasiness, and she still lives—unhappily the inmate of an asylum. I am sure I need make no comment on the conduct of Colonel ———, to whom she was, it appeared, a comparative stranger.

Three other cases resisted all my efforts, and, though everything possible was done, they died, and the sufferings of two of these poor creatures, when the stomach-pump had been repeated for some weeks, were so great, that I ceased to continue its use.

I shall, indeed, rejoice, if some more efficacious remedy can be suggested for these truly distressing cases.

I am, dear Sir,

Faithfully yours,

G. WYTHE DANIEL, M.D.