

American Notes, Chapter V: Hartford [The Insane Asylum]

"I very much questioned within myself, as I walked through the Insane Asylum, whether I should have known the attendants from the patients, but for the few words which passed between the former, and the Doctor, in reference to the persons under the former, and the Doctor, in reference to the persons under their charge. Of course, I limit this remark merely to their looks, for the conversation of the mad people was mad enough.

[The Antediluvian]

There was one little, prim Old Lady, of very smiling and good-humored appearance, who came sidling up to me from the end of a long passage, and with a curtesy of inexpressible condescension, propounded this unaccountable inquiry:

'Does Pontefract still flourish, sir, upon the soil of England?'*

'It does, ma'am,' I rejoined.

'When you last saw him, sir, he was---'

'Well, ma'am,' said I, 'extremely well. He begged me to present his compliments. I never saw him looking better.'

*'I am an antediluvian,** sir.'*

'I suspected as much.'

'It is an extremely proud and pleasant thing, sir, to be an antediluvian.'

'I should think it was, ma'am.'

The Old Lady kissed her hand, gave another skip, smirked, and sidled down the gallery in a most extraordinary manner; and ambled gracefully into her own bed-chamber.

[The Siege of New York]

In another part of the building, there was a male patient in bed, very much flushed and heated.

'Well,' said he, starting up and pulling off his nightcap, 'It's all settled at last. I have arranged it with Queen Victoria.'

'Arranged what?' asked the Doctor.

'Why, that business about the siege of New York.'

'Oh!' said I like a man suddenly enlightened.

'Yes. Every house without a signal will be fired upon by the British troops. No harm will be done to the others. No harm at all. Those that want to be safe must hoist flags. That's all they'll have to do. They must hoist flags.'"

* A historic market town in West Yorkshire.

** Someone born before Noah's flood.