

Psychiatry in pictures

EDITED BY ALLAN BEVERIDGE

Do you have an image, preferably accompanied by 100 to 200 words of explanatory text, that you think would be suitable for Psychiatry in Pictures? Submissions are very welcome and should be sent direct to Dr Allan Beveridge, Queen Margaret Hospital, Whitefield Road, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 0SU, UK.



Circumvention (1889) by Charles Altamont Doyle (1832–1893)

This is another picture from the 1889 sketchbook of Charles Altamont Doyle's which he completed while an inmate of the Montrose Asylum. In the opening page of the sketchbook, Doyle declared his aim: 'keep steadily in view that this Book is ascribed wholly to the produce of a MADMAN. Whereabouts would you say was the deficiency of intellect? Or depraved taste. If in the whole Book you can find a single Evidence of either, mark it and record it against me'. Doyle's artistic work was a means of demonstrating to himself and others that he was sane. He maintained that he was wrongfully confined but, despite this, he made several affectionate sketches of staff, patients and of the asylum activities. Doyle also contributed drawings, articles and poems to the asylum magazine, *The Sunnyside Chronicle*. In 1888, three years after his admission to the Montrose Asylum, he was commissioned by his son, Arthur Conan Doyle, to illustrate *A Study in Scarlet*, the first full-length Sherlock Holmes novel. Arthur felt his father was 'a great and original artist . . . the greatest, in my opinion, of the family'. However, critics, armed with the knowledge that Doyle ended his days in an asylum, have inspected his work for signs of mental pathology. The subject matter of his art, such as the fairies and giant wildlife, has been taken as evidence of mental disturbance, but such themes were common in Victorian painting and did not necessarily betoken insanity.

Picture reproduced in Baker, M. (1978) *The Doyle Diary*. Paddington Press.