The seaton remained till Saturday, the 14th October, fifty-eight days from the time of its insertion. The delirium abated evidently and steadily, from the time that suppuration was so established. He soon began to walk about the room, then in the street near his residence, and gradually extending his promenade, came to see me at my office and report on his condition. When the seaton was removed, his intellect was perfectly clear and his physical health completely restored. No inconvenience resulted from the drying up of the suppuration, and he returned to his occupation in perfectly restored health.—*Southern Journal of Medicine and Pharmacy, May, 1846.*

ARTICLE VII.

CASE OF MONOMANIA,

Arising out of the Trial of Madame Lafarge. Translated from the French. By H. S. BELCOMBE, M. D., Membre de L'Institute Historique a Paris, Senior Physician to the County Hospital, and Physician to the Retreat, York.

M. Esquirol has expressed an opinion that it was possible to write the state of society at any given period, from the mental hallucinations then prevailing. There seems to be no doubt, that during the "proces" or trial of Lafarge's wife for his destruction, through the covered means of arsenic, there occurred in France many cases of mental alienation, all referring to this impression. The subjoined history, drawn up by M. le docteur Jossat, Membre de l'Institut Historique, 3sieme, Classe, he considers less an argument in favor of Esquirol's opinion, than as an additional fact which may strengthen the solution of the problem of

madness, relatively to its seat, to its nature, to its varied complications, and perhaps to its treatment.

Lepers was born at Lille: his family was easy in circumstances, though not rich, and he received a proportionate education. He was early remarked by his habits of order and economy, by a strict sense of rectitude, yet by an obstinacy of opinion that would never allow himself to be in the wrong. His form was athletic, his temperament musculo-sanguineous, (musculo-sanguin,) the head a type of the antique statuary,—the head that gives the idea of dignity and benevolence. Lepers in the course of time, and under the influence of circumstances became a cooper, and prospering in his business, he married a German, to whom he was much attached. but whose disposition was that of a narrow mind, (taquin,) and far from according with his own.

Having fixed his residence at Port Mahon, Paris, in a prosperous business, much esteemed, in good credit, sought after from his skill, his probity, and his punctuality, nothing appeared likely to disturb the serenity of his life, which he not only felt, but endeavoured to share with his friends.

At this period came on the celebrated "proces" of Lafarge. Lepers became strongly interested in it, and at once denounced the wife. Madame Lepers took the other side. Their discussions, calm at first, became, like most arguments, angry and abusive, and Lepers, formerly so difficultly provoked, was soon irritated, animated, and violently excited, whenever he found he could not convince. At length "Le drama de Glandiers" terminated, and the jury gave a verdict according to Lepers' preconceived opinion. His wife nevertheless, and without any respect to judge or jury, maintains hers. The exasperation of Lepers is at its acme; suddenly he stops, crosses his arms, and with a piercing look upon his wife, exclaims, "*If indeed you could do this!*"

On the morrow Lepers complained of exceeding pain in all his limbs, and of a severe colic; he spoke of his sufferings without stating any reason for them. He repaired to a

chemist to analyse his "urine," and the reply was, "there was nothing to justify any suspicion;" he nevertheless considered himself poisoned, and from that moment it became the fixed opinion of his mind. Hitherto of a reserved habit, that was abandoned, and he declared everywhere he was poisoned, and poisoned by his wife.

The narrative proceeds:—M. de Jossat says, "I go back to the day when he first came to consult me on his case; his broken-down suffering aspect, his haggard features, his trembling limbs, affected me much. He at once commenced relating the history of his miseries:—The arsenic was put into his food with a skill that defied the most vigilant observation. The criminal wife pursued her intention with the certainty of result, which Lepers related with fascinating eloquence. The recital lasted above an hour, without my being able to suspect that my relator was mad. The perfect appearance of truth in the details, their admirable union, the air of conviction that marked his words, the bodily tortures so emphatically expressed, and above all that beautiful physiognomy he possessed,—those who knew him will well understand me,—all contribute to fascinate me. I believed entirely in his statement, I told him so, in a manner which gained his entire confidence, and which was never withdrawn. An appointment was made for the next day.

"In the meantime I saw his wife, his friends, and neighbors. My first impressions were disabused, and on the morrow, without ceasing apparently to think with him, I prescribed what I considered necessary to neutralize the effects of the poison already absorbed. I advised him to take his repasts from home; this counsel was followed, and Lepers recovered his ordinary health and gaiety. In a few weeks, however, he returned to me, complaining of all his former evils. Now his wife powdered over the bed-clothes, the linen, his body garments, with arsenic; he left his bed, slept alone, kept one room to himself, and for a time, by these means, was comfortable; but in a fortnight the whole assemblage of evils reappeared. Now his wife had intro-

duced the impalpable powder through the floor of his apartment, and the air he breathed was saturated with the arsenic."

Under such circumstances it became necessary to remove him, and with much address he was placed at Charenton. For a month of his continuance there he was resigned, polite to all, never making the slightest complaint; his conversation was eagerly sought for by the medical attendants, and it began to be disputed whether he was a fit subject for such a hospital. At that time his wife, with whom he was on good terms, notwithstanding the crimes with which he reproached her, came to see him. After the immediate interview, "I do not like," he said, "to converse with you among such a set of people; ask permission for us to take a walk out of the establishment." The confidence in Lepers was so great, that the permission was easily granted, but no sooner had he touched the threshold of the gate, than leaving his wife, he started off, and hardly stopped till he arrived at Lille, in Flanders. There his family, who had never credited his insanity, received him as a victim of bad proceedings, and of the cupidity of his wife.

To her he now wrote a letter, a model of its kind, relating to her his grievances in detail, (one by one,) and ending by an offer of pardon. He followed this up by returning to Paris. His return to his domicile was accompanied by scenes of sentimental and conjugal effusion, by a frankness sufficient to deceive even great sagacity, and for eight days the mutual happiness appeared to be complete. One fine evening, after an agreeable repast, the couple walked in their court-yard for the pleasure of breathing the fresh air; observing his wife yawn, Lepers said her digestion was bad, and would be all the better for a glass of Kirschen; he immediately went for it, and returned with a bottle, but it was of Geneva. Madame Lepers, a German, remarked that she liked only the liquor of her country. The dreadful idea shot like lightning through his brain, that she refused it because it was poisoned. To seize a mallet, to strike her

several blows upon the head, so as to lay her dead at his feet, was but the work of a moment. Before any help could be called, he reentered his house, barricadoed the door, ran up stairs, and with a razor, cut his throat, so as nearly to divide the trachea. Finding death not at hand, he stabbed himself frequently in the region of the heart, and with what power he had left, beat the left temporal region with a mallet, and so passed the night bathed in blood. The spectacle that Lepers offered on the morning when discovered passes any power of description. He yet lived, and advice being called in, and every proper attention paid, in four weeks he was cured. He was placed in the Asylum of M. Pinel, until the ends of justice could be determined. Twice, notwithstanding the strictest vigilance, he contrived to escape; and, finally, he was placed at the Bicetre, where, adds M. Jossat, "he expired almost at the same time that I conclude the history of his derangement."

M. Jossat concludes his paper with the subjoined reflections:—"No instance of mental alienation had been known to occur in the family of Lepers; an hereditary taint as the cause, is therefore at once dismissed. Up to the hour when the idea of being poisoned became fixed in his mind, he was noted for his good sense, for the integrity of his heart, and for the clearness of his intellect; even when this suspicion had taken the character of monomania his intelligence upon all other matters was such, that his whole family refused to credit the notion of insanity, and I myself after our first interview, remained for many hours under the same conviction. M. Fergus, the person appointed to examine him, declined for a long time to insert in his report any reference to a disordered state of mind, so careful was Lepers, during all his interviews, not to give any occasion for such suspicion. In the course of his business, he had never said or done anything which could induce any presumption of an unsound mind. Lepers, with a multitude of others, became interested in the process against Madame Lafarge. His judgment was soon satisfied that she was guilty. His wife

opposed this opinion, and their arguments were renewed daily; at length the jury confirmed his previously-drawn conclusion. Now, at least, it must be acknowledged he was right. No! Madame Lepers persists in spite of all legal conviction. Then comes the feeling, that there must be some deeper cause for this obstinacy—some hateful attempt against his own life, with probable impunity in executing it. This idea, conceived in one moment, becomes the predominant passion of his life, and during its short remainder, his only thoughts are how to escape from this infliction.

“Again, as if Lepers were destined to combine in some way the mysteries of the physical power, with the moral condition of man, he survived wounds, any one of which would have destroyed one of less vigorous organization than his. He not only survived, but was cured in twenty-five days, and his escapes from Chaillot, the place of his detention, showed wonderful combinations of ingenuity and self possession.

“Can phrenology give any assistance in the solution of this singular case? Is the localization of organs to be insisted upon, when Leper’s rationality is sound upon every subject but one: that also hardly perceptible, except at times manifesting itself, yet constantly and painfully tracing consequences deduced from a supposed and imaginary fact, (*d’un fait sans fondement?*) Can the principle be admitted, that the aberration of a faculty will be always found accompanied with the lesion of a corresponding *material* organ, when Lepers is found now drooping, now resuming his fatal suspicion, at the same time in all other relations of life pursuing the conduct of an upright and skilful artizan.

“The human mind, capable of solving so many problems, is it always to find in itself, one that is insolvable.”

There are many more “reflexions,” *tres Francaises*, but I agree with M. Jossat, that they would be only tedious to my readers.—*Provincial Med. & Surg. Journal.*