XXVI.—*Report on a Communication from Dr DYCE of Aberdeen, to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, "On Uterine Irritation, and its Effects on the Female Constitution."* By
H. DEWAR, M. D. F. R. S. EDIN.

(*Read February 18. 1822.*)

THE communication received from Dr DYCE chiefly consists of a description of a singular affection of the nervous system, and mental powers, to which a girl of sixteen was subject immediately before puberty, and which disappeared when that state was fully established. It exemplifies the powerful influence of the state of the uterus on the mental faculties; but its chief value arises from some curious relations which it presents to the phenomena of mind, and which claim the attention of the practical metaphysician. The mental symptoms of this affection are among the number of those which are considered as uncommonly difficult of explanation. It is a case of mental disease, attended with some advantageous manifestations of the intellectual powers; and these manifestations disappearing in the same individual in the healthy state. It is an instance of a phenomenon which is sometimes called double consciousness, but is more properly a *divided consciousness*, or *double personality*; exhibiting in some measure two separate

parate and independent trains of thought, and two independent mental capabilities, in the same individual; each train of thought, and each capability, being wholly dissevered from the other, and the two states in which they respectively predominate subject to frequent interchanges and alternations.

The particulars will be most agreeably communicated, in the order of their occurrence which is followed by Dr DYCE,—part of the narrative being given in the words of Mrs L——, in whose house the patient lived as a servant, and the rest in the words of Dr DYCE himself, consisting of the facts which fell under his own observation.

The history of the complaint, while under the eye of this gentleman, extends from the 2d of March 1815, to the 11th of the following June, including a period of more than three months. But the symptoms had made their appearance in the end of the preceding December.

The first symptom was an uncommon propensity to fall asleep in the evenings, for which she was reproved by Mrs L——. This was followed by the habit of *talking* in her sleep on these occasions. She not only uttered such wild incoherent expressions as persons, under the affection of sleep-talking commonly do, but repeated the occurrences of the day. She also sang musical airs, both sacred and profane.

One evening, in the house of an acquaintance of Mrs L——, where she seems to have come for the purpose of seeing her mistress home, she fell asleep in this manner, imagined herself an Episcopal clergyman, went through the ceremony of baptizing three children, and gave an appropriate, *extempore* prayer. Her mistress shook her by the shoulders, on which she awoke, and appeared unconscious of every thing except that she had fallen asleep, of which she shewed herself ashamed.

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Another evening, having fallen asleep surrounded by some of the inhabitants of the house, she imagined herself to be living with her aunt at Epsom, and going to the races; placed herself on one of the kitchen stools, and rode upon it into the room, with much spirit, and a clattering noise, but without being wakened. Being afterwards severely reprimanded for this exhibition, she continued free from the habit for a week. After that interval, however, it returned in a similar form, with this addition, that, when in this state, she answered questions which were put to her by others. The disease now increased, and came on her at different times of the evening and morning. She sometimes dressed herself and the children while in this state, or, as Mrs L—— calls it, “dead asleep,” answered questions put to her in such a manner as to shew that she understood the question; but the answers were often, though not always, incongruous. One day, when she was in this state, her fellow-servant was desired to get the key of a closet from her, in order to do the duty which was generally hers, that of setting the breakfast-table. The girl, however, refused to give up the key, and set the breakfast herself with perfect correctness, with her eyes shut. She afterwards woke with the child on her knee, and wondered how she had got on her clothes. If seized in this manner in the house, she was sometimes restored to her senses by being taken out to the cold air, especially when the wind blew in her face. At other times she was seized with this affection while walking out with the children.

In the mean time, a still more singular and interesting symptom began to make its appearance. The circumstances which occurred during the paroxysm were completely forgotten by her when the paroxysm was over, but were perfectly remembered during subsequent paroxysms. Her mistress

says, that, when in this stupor on subsequent occasions, she told her what was said to her on the evening on which she baptized the children. It was remarked that, while under the paroxysm, she knew a person better by looking at the shadow than at the body ; that is, she perceived those objects best which were presented merely in outline, or were very dimly illuminated. The disease made progress in the interval between its first appearance in December and the beginning of March, though no dates of its different stages are given. From the 2d of March till its disappearance Dr DYCE's account is very circumstantial.

She was brought to him for medical advice by her mother. The mother called these affections *sleepy fits*. The girl herself called them *wanderings*. They sometimes continued for an hour. If they came on when she was in bed, she sometimes rose and tried to raise the sashes of the windows. The eyes were described as half-shut, the pupils dilated, and the cornea covered with a dimness or glaze, resembling those of a person in syncope. She answered many questions correctly, shewing at times scarcely any failure of her mental powers. It was remarked, that she always retained the impression last made on her previous to the fit.

With regard to the case as an object of medical attention, it is sufficient to mention that some foulness of tongue, and other symptoms of torpor or disorder in the alimentary canal, accompanied these mental phenomena, and were treated by Dr DYCE principally with emetics and laxatives, in proportion to their degree.

The symptoms of the paroxysm, as they fell under the Doctor's own eye for the first time, are thus described. " When she was brought to my room she appeared as if in a state of stupor.

stupor. Her eyes were half-open ; but, when desired, she could open them completely. At other times she closed them, as if unconscious of what she did. When desired to look at me, and tell who I was, she gave a vacant kind of stare, and named some other person. When desired to look round, and say where she was; she looked round with some apparent attention ; but, though she had been in that room more than once before, she said she was in the New Inn. When desired to turn her eyes to the direct rays of the sun, she readily obeyed, but there was no perceptible contraction of the iris. She saw some objects perfectly, for she read quite distinctly a part of the dedication of a book which she could not have seen before, and corrected herself in the pronunciation of the word *conspicuous*, which she had called *conspicious*. Being asked to tell the hour by a watch which was shewn to her, she did not give the proper answer. Pulse 70 ; extremities rather cold. Being desired to stand up, she did it most readily, but required some time and a little effort, to stand firmly, as she staggered at first like a person waked out of sleep. But soon after, she could stand, walk, or dance as well as other people. Being desired to sing, she sang a hymn delightfully ; and from a comparison which I (Dr Dyce) had an opportunity of making, it appeared incomparably better sung than she could sing the same tune when well. The same appeared to be the case to persons whose skill in music was much superior to my own."

Her hands were immersed in cold water, in consequence of which she recovered her senses, exactly like a person waked out of a sound sleep, and with the same yawning and stretching. This mode of rousing her had often succeeded in the house where she lived, and was tried now at the suggestion of the person who accompanied her. She now knew the persons and things surrounding her.

The account which she gave of her feelings as connected with her present situation was, that previously to an attack she felt drowsy, with a little pain in the head ; then a cloudiness or mistiness came over her eyes ; she heard a peculiar noise in her head resembling that of a carriage running, and had a feeling of motion as if she were seated in such a carriage. When this stage supervened, her conceptions of external objects were immediately altered.

Next day (March 5.) while under a fit, she performed in the most correct manner some of her accustomed duties relating to the pantry, and the dinner-table. Dr DYCE went to see her ; she gave him a wrong name as formerly ; when her mistress desired her to stand straight up, look round, and tell where she was, she recovered instantly ; but it was only for a little ; she very soon relapsed. When asked to read in an almanac held before her, she did not seem to see it, nor did she notice a stick which was held out to her. Being asked a second time to read, she repeated a portion of Scripture, and did not give a correct answer when asked where she was. Being desired to state what she felt, she put her hand to her forehead, and complained of her head ; said “ she saw the mice running through the room.” Mrs L—— mentioned that she had said the same thing on many former occasions, even when her eyes were shut ; that she also frequently imagined that she was accompanied by a little black dog, which she could not get rid of ; did not, in general, express any particular uneasiness from that cause ; at times, however, cried in consequence of it, and at other times laughed immoderately. In some of her repeated paroxysms, she insisted that she was going to church to preach. One day, while taking out two infants for an airing, she was seized with one of her fits on the quay, and without hesitation walked along a single plank placed between a vessel

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sel and the shore, and even danced on it with the children. Of this circumstance she afterwards, when well, denied all knowledge. This was invariably the case ; but with equal regularity she acknowledged and asserted it when under the influence of a paroxysm.

On the following day she had a threatening, which went off without being followed by the usual degree of insensibility. She says she now knows for a quarter of an hour before the attack. This day some local bodily symptoms were added to her usual complaint, which it is unnecessary to particularise, but which were fully accounted for by a horrid transaction which on the following day (the 8th of March), her mother related to Dr DYCE. Another young woman, a depraved fellow-servant, understanding that she wholly forgot every transaction that occurred during the fit, clandestinely introduced a young man into the house, who treated her with the utmost rudeness, while her fellow-servant stopped her mouth with the bed-clothes, and otherwise overpowered a vigorous resistance which was made by her even during the influence of her complaint. Next day she had not the slightest recollection even of that transaction, nor did any person interested in her welfare know of it for several days, till she was in one of her paroxysms, when she related the whole facts to her mother. Some particulars are given by Dr DYCE clothed in the Latin language, and others were told him which he does not think it necessary at all to detail.

Next Sunday she was taken to church by her mistress, while the paroxysm was on her. She shed tears during the sermon, particularly during an account given of the execution of three young men at Edinburgh, who had described in their dying declarations the dangerous steps with which their career of vice and infamy took its commencement. When she returned home,
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she recovered in a quarter of an hour, was quite amazed at the questions put to her about the church and the sermon, and denied that she had been in any such place ; but next night, on being taken ill, she mentioned that she had been at church, repeated the words of the text, and, in Dr DYCE's hearing, gave an accurate account of the tragical narrative of the three young men, by which her feelings had been so powerfully affected. On this occasion, though in Mrs L——'s house, she asserted that she was in her mother's.

Dr DYCE saw her on many subsequent occasions, when similarly affected, and from one fit she recovered in his presence. He said the eyes had now all the vivacity of youth and health. Previously they were like those of a person under amaurosis, or those of a person half-inebriated, and who had never been in that state before. The difference, he says, is not perfectly expressed by either or both of these comparisons, but was very striking to all who saw her.

Calling one day, an hour after recovering from a fit with which she had been seized in the morning, she was quite well, only complaining of a confused feeling in her head, accompanied now and then with ringing of the ears. The countenance was somewhat dejected, and there was a slight lividity under the eyes.

On one occasion, when the Doctor saw her in a fit, he says her stare was accompanied with something resembling a *squint* in the eye.

About the 26th of March she complained of a pain in her head, as if it had been cut in two. Formerly she had only complained of confusion.

On Sunday the 26th, while in a fit, she commenced preparations for going to church ; but, while curling her hair, burned her brow with the hot curling-tongs, which roused her from the
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the torpid state, and she immediately recollected that her mistress had given her orders to stay at home.

On Friday the 7th of April, Dr DYCE had an opportunity of seeing her under the influence of a fit, in her mistress's house. He found her running up and down the room, and arranging things which appeared to her to be in confusion. On being asked if she knew him, she said, " Oh yes, I know that stick and tassel ; they are Dr DYCE's." Her eyelids appeared shut ; but when he stooped, and looked to them from below, he found them not entirely closed. When he raised the upper eyelid a little, it seemed to give her pain, at least she would not allow it to be repeated. When he desired her to point to different parts of his body and dress, and name them, he found that she could not do it when the light of the candle or fire shone fully on him ; but pointed out every part accurately, when it was placed in the shade. At this time, when he tried again to open the eyelids, he found the pupils greatly contracted, a state the reverse of that which made its appearance in all his previous examinations. This contrariety is not easily explained when we consider that the habitudes of the function of vision seemed in all other respects the same as on former occasions.

On examining her head all over, Dr DYCE now remarked particularly, that she shrunk much when he touched the upper part, the region of the fontanelle. The head was shaved, with a view to the application of a blister, and he found some degree of swelling in that situation. The soreness was entirely superficial, for a light touch gave the same pain as a ruder impulse, or a considerable pressure.

From Monday the 17th of April, till Friday the 2d of May, she was free from any paroxysm.

In consequence of the appearance of bloody stools, and other symptoms of a similar nature, Dr DYCE thought proper to

to have her bled. An emetic was exhibited, and brought up from the stomach a black matter, appearing to consist partly of old and darkened blood.

On the 18th of June she felt a little fulness and uneasiness in her breasts.

On the evening of the 11th there was a slight appearance of the menstrual discharge, which disappeared next day.

On the 15th the same appearance occurred.

The menses appeared regularly on the 9th of July and the 5th of August.

Ever after the first appearance of this discharge, she continued free from complaint, up to the time when Dr Drex's account closes, when he had just seen his quondam patient more than a year after she had been perfectly well.

THIS case certainly gives an interesting illustration of the obliquities to which the physiology of the nerves, and the exercise of the mental powers are subject.

Somnambulism is in itself a very remarkable phenomenon, not so much from the partiality of the affection of the senses implied in it, for this is sufficiently exemplified in the act of dreaming, in which the imagination alone is active, and is not guided, and but very obscurely influenced, by any of the objects which solicit the external senses. It is well known, however, to those who have studied the history of dreams, that this is not always the case, and that in many instances the manner of dreaming is dictated not only by the scenes in which the individual has been engaged when awake, but by those objects which are at the time presented to his senses, especially to those of touch and hearing. The most remarkable circumstance

in the least degree recognised or brought to mind by any suggested associations, unless they occurred in that train, and while the mind was under that particular diseased habit under which they were generated; and in this case they occurred with readiness and fidelity.

This, indeed, was a case of disease, evidently depending on the state of the brain as connected with the habitudes of the sanguiferous system. In this particular it is to be ranked with the aberrations which constitute many cases of insanity; and it is both curious and humbling to think, that in insanity itself there is scarcely a mental irregularity admitting of description, but what may be shown to be only a greater degree of those mental aberrations, those follies, and those partialities to which the most vigorous and the most correct minds are continually liable *

The strong contrast between the mental states of this person under her fit, and when it was off, is to be classed with a set of facts, of which some other examples have lately come to the public knowledge. One of them was in an apparently simple girl in the neighbourhood of Stirling, who, in her sleep, talked like a profound philosopher, solved geographical problems, and enlarged on the principles of astronomy, detailing the workings of ideas which had been suggested to her mind, by over-hearing the lessons which were given by a tutor to the children of the family in which she lived. The originality of the language which she used, shewed something more than a bare repetition of what she had heard. She explained the alternations of winter and summer, for instance, by saying, that "the earth was set a-gee."

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* Some views on this subject are given by the author of the present report in the article "Insanity," in the Edinburgh Encyclopædia.

Another case was mentioned in some of the newspapers, two or perhaps three years ago, of a more marked instance of double consciousness. The individual was liable to two states, each of which, if I rightly recollect, continued for two or more years. In the one state, when it first came on, there was an oblivion of all former education, but no deficiency of mental vigour as applied to ideas or pursuits subsequently presenting themselves. It was necessary for this woman to recommence the studies of reading and the art of writing. A separate set of notions, and separate accomplishments were now formed. In one of the states an exquisite talent for music, and some others which implied refinement, were displayed. When another mental revolution arrived, these utterly disappeared, and the individual was reduced to a level with the rest of mankind, displaying a sufficient portion of common sense, but nothing brilliant.

Differences more or less allied to these are produced by a variety of causes.

Sometimes external fortune has an influence of this kind. There are individuals who, in the hour of prosperity, and when under the influence of sober and uniform gratification, show an exquisite taste for music, but lose this as soon as a slight cloud appears on the horizon of life, and who then, though they evince such talents as are the result of persevering thought, and are capable of being exercised by deliberate study, lose all that satisfactory delight which gives birth to a brilliancy of mental manifestations ; at least these only appear in the occasional occurrence of happy combinations, being never, for any length of time, animated by such a supported impulse as to generate a current of habitual felicities.

Sometimes the state of the brain, as influenced primarily by disease, determines the operation of these mental states.

External applications are well known to possess a similar agency. We all know the influence of opium, and still more familiarly that of inebriating liquors.

A more singular agent is the gas called the nitrous oxide, when inspired by the lungs, by the use of which the individual is elevated in half a minute to the third heavens, and when it is discontinued, is in an instant reduced again to the feelings of a common child of earth.

The girl who is the subject of Dr DYCE's communication made, in the mode of commencement of her paroxysm, an approach to what is frequently the effect of this curious agent. Some persons (perhaps the greater number) who breathe the gas first feel a little confusion, afterwards a tingling in the ears, then a sensation of great fulness and tension of the cranium, giving the idea of a bladder distended with air. This is accompanied with a feeling of alarm, but is instantly followed by a train of rapturous thoughts, accompanied by a feeling of mental power, during which thousands of ideas seem to pass through the mind in a small fraction of a minute, and the individual feels as if nothing in the universe could resist his energies. The commencement of this state has some resemblance to that of this girl, as above described; she said that she first felt a drowsiness, with a little pain in the head; then a cloud or mist came over her eyes, attended with a peculiar noise and motion in the head, resembling a carriage in which she was placed, moving along with great velocity. The resemblance is not perfect. It is only such as to shew some analogy between the effects of the nitrous oxide and the state induced by a paroxysm of disease arising from particular spontaneous circumstances of the constitution, and accompanied by a sufficient susceptibility to tender emotions, and the exhibition of more than her ordinary degree of musical taste and execution.

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THE preceding analogies are, I confess, somewhat loose. It would be interesting to have a copious collection of well authenticated facts, and an arrangement given to them fitted to shew the shades of transition by which different mental states graduate into one another.

H. DEWAR.

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