ARTICLE II.

REMARKS UPON MONOMANIA,

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Monomania is indisputably the most singular of all forms of insanity. Every day, under the influence of fierce passion, or of certain poisonous agents, we see produced an unnatural state of intellectual excitement, which aids us in understanding maniacal delirium, and also enables us to comprehend pretty accurately that disorder of the faculties, more or less general, which is accompanied by loquacity, agitation, &c.

But the case is different as to monomania. How is it that a single fixed idea, often absurd, can maintain itself thus isolated in the midst of an intellect, to all appearance sound? In truth, this can not be so readily explained as the complete perversion of the faculties, hence it is with great difficulty that we are brought to admit the existence of veritable monomaniacs, in the strict acceptation of the term. At this day no one refuses to recognize the existence of this kind of insanity, but there is far from being the same harmony of opinion as to its frequency.

M. Foville, in an able article in the *Dictionnaire de médecine pratique*, has designated monomania as being, in its simple form, *exceedingly* rare, he having seen, he says, only two cases. We know many physicians, who at this day coincide with M. Foville in this opinion. This form of insanity is, they say, much less frequent than Esquirol claimed. of which fact they have been able to satisfy themselves

by carefully studying the cases of those patients who have been considered as subjects of monomania ; they also say that they have recognized in almost all these cases, an insanity far more general than would at first have been suspected, so, that in fact, the word *polymania* would be more appropriate to the great majority of these cases, than that of *monomania*, &c., &c.

In truth, we believe that there are very many patients who are called *monomaniacs*, whose insanity is not strictly confined to a single false idea ; but we also believe that Esquirol never claimed the contrary. We will in another place, consider the expediency of changing the name of the disease in cases of this kind.

But shall we relinquish the investigation of monomania, carefully restricted to those cases which rigorously deserve the appellation, because it may have been shown that they are exceedingly rare, and, so to speak, exceptionable? We think not.

Those who have argued against the frequency of the occurrence of these cases of monomania, seem either to have forgotten or to have omitted the mention of one fact, which seems to us of the first importance, in reference to this question. There exists in our opinion, a large number of monomaniacs, for whom physicians are not consulted, or are not until the lapse of a greater or less number of years, upon the occurrence of some more general disturbance of the intellect. But it is by observing the disease at its commencement, or at least before it has transcended certain limits, that we are especially able to satisfy ourselves, that there are very many cases in which the insanity is strictly confined to a single idea, or to a single series of ideas, always the same. This insanity has often existed for a long time without being suspected, it having produced no disturbance. Without the avowal of the patient himself, we can know nothing of his long continued sufferings, nothing of his struggles against the single fixed idea, which at last obtains complete ascendancy. Thus suicide is frequently the first signal of all this inward combat, which nothing has before revealed.

The same is true of homicidal monomania. This sometimes remains concealed for a long time, not being made known to the physician, until the patient, alarmed at the progress of his insanity, decides that he will seek assistance.

This is verified by the following case, which presents us at the same time, one of the most curious examples of homicidal monomania which science possesses.

"I, the undersigned, William Calmeilles, health officer, residing in the principal town of the canton of Cazals (Lot), certify to all whom it may concern, that upon the requisition of the mayor of the commune of Marminiat, I have this day been to the village of Brunet, in the aforesaid commune of Marminiat, to decide upon the mental condition of a person named John Glenadel, a husbandman, dwelling in the said village of Brunet.

"I found Glenadel sitting upon his bed, having a cord around his neck, fastened by the other end to the head of the bed; his arms were also tied together at the wrist with another cord. In giving my report, I do not believe that it can be better made, than by recording the conversation which took place between Glenadel and myself, in the presence of his brother and sister-in-law.

Question. Are you unwell?

Answer. I am very well; my health is excellent.

Q. What is your name?

A. John Glenadel.

Q. What is your age?

A. I am forty-three; I was born in '96, see if this is not correct.

Q. Is it by compulsion or by your own consent that you are bound in this manner?

A. It is not only by my consent, but I demanded that it should be done.

Q. Why is this?

A. To restrain me from committing a crime of which I have the greatest horror, and which, in spite of myself, I am constantly impelled to execute.

Q. What is this crime ?

A. I have one thought which constantly torments me, and which I can not conquer ; that I must kill my sister-in-law, and I should do it were I not restrained.

Q. How long have you had this idea ?

A. About six or seven years.

Q. Have you any cause of complaint against your sister-in-law ?

A. Not the least, Monsieur ; it is only this one unfortunate idea which troubles me, and I feel that I must put it in execution.

Q. Have you ever thought of killing any one besides your sister-in-law ?

A. I at first thought of killing my mother ; this thought seized me when I was fifteen or sixteen years old, at the age of puberty, in 1812, as I well recollect. Since that time I have not passed one happy hour ; I have been the most miserable of men.

Q. Did you conquer this unfortunate idea ?

A. In 1822, I could no longer resist, I being at that time, twenty-five or six years of age, and to remove this unfortunate inclination, I joined the army in the capacity of a substitute. I was two years in Spain with my regiment, and then returned to France, but this fixed idea followed me everywhere ; more than once I was tempted to desert to go and kill my mother. In 1826, they gave me an unlimited furlough, although it was unsolicited by me, and I returned to my father's house, my fatal idea returning with me. I passed four years with my mother, always having an almost irresistible inclination to kill her.

Q. What did you do then ?

A. Then Monsieur, seeing that I should inevitably commit a crime which terrified me and filled me with horror, I in 1830, rejoined the army, that I might not succumb to this temptation. I left for the second time my father's house, but my fixed idea again followed me, and at last, I almost decided to desert that I might go and kill my mother.

Q. Did you have any cause of complaint against your mother ?

A. No, Monsieur, I loved her very much ; thus, before starting I said to myself, " Shall I kill that mother who has exercised so much care over me during my infancy, and who has loved me so well, although I have entertained this fatal thought against her ? I will not do it, but I must kill some one." It was then that the thought of killing my sister-in-law first occurred to me ; I have a distinct recollection of this, I being at that time in Dax, and it was in the year 1832. It was then announced to me that my sister-in-law was dead ; which was a mistake, it being another relative who had died. I then accepted of the furlough they had offered me, which I should by no means have done, had I known that my sister-in-law was still living. When I reached my home and was informed that she was not dead, I experienced such a sinking and depression of spirits that I became quite sick, and my idea resumed its course.

Q. What instrument do you choose with which to kill your sister-in-law ?

Here Glenadel was much affected, his eyes were bathed in tears, and looking towards his sister-in-law, he replied—" That instrument which would inflict the least pain !" But however that may be, the time approaches I perceive, when she must die, and this is as certain as that God lives.

Q. Do you not dread to inflict so much misery and anguish upon your brother and your little nephews ?

A. The thought of this has troubled me somewhat, but I should receive the punishment due my crime, and should neither see nor know anything of their affliction ; the world would rid itself of a monster such as me, and I should cease to live ; I should not expect after this to see a single hour of happiness.

It here occurred to me that M. Grandsault, of Salviat, my companion and friend, who is at present in Paris, had told me, about a year before, of a young man, who, some years previously had come, accompanied by his mother, to

consult him as to his own case, which presented many features very similar to those exhibited by Glenadel; as these cases are so very uncommon, I thought that perhaps this person and Glenadel might prove to be the same. I therefore asked him if it was he who had consulted my friend, and he replied in the affirmative.

Q. What did M. Grandsault counsel you ?

A. He gave me most valuable advice, and he also bled me.

Q. Did you experience any benefit from this bleeding ?

A. Not the least; my unfortunate idea pursued me with the same force.

Q. I am about to make a report upon your mental condition, from which will be decided whether you shall be placed in a hospital where you may recover from your insanity.

A. My recovery is impossible ; but make your report as quick as possible, time presses ; I can control myself but little longer.

Q. It must be that your parents have instilled into your mind correct moral principles, that they have set before you good examples, and that you yourself have possessed a virtuous mind, to have resisted for so long a time this terrible temptation. Here Glenadel was again much affected, he shed tears and replied, ' You are correct in this, Monsieur ; but this resistance is more painful than death ; I know that I can resist but little longer, and I shall kill my sister-in-law unless I am restrained, as sure as there is a God.'

Glenadel, said I to him, before leaving you let me ask of you one favor : resist still for some days longer, and you shall not see your sister-in-law for a long time, as we will so arrange matters that you can leave here, since you so much desire it. Monsieur, I thank you, and I will make arrangements to comply with your recommendation.

I left the house, and as I was about to mount my horse, Glenadel called me back, and when I had approached near to him, he said to me : Tell these gentlemen that I beseech

them to put me in some place from whence it will be impossible for me to escape, for I should make attempts to do so, and were I to succeed in getting away, my sister-in-law would have to die, for I could not avoid killing her ; tell these gentlemen that it is my own self who has said this to you. I assured him that I would do this ; but as I saw that he was in a state of great excitement, I asked him if the cord which bound his arms was strong enough, and if he did not think that by a strong effort he could break it. He made an attempt and then said, I fear that I might. But if I should procure for you something that would confine your arms still more securely, would you accept of it ? With thanks, Monsieur. Then I will ask the commander of the gend'arms to give me that with which he is accustomed to confine the arms of prisoners, and I will send it to you. You will confer upon me a great favor.

"I purposed to make many visits to Glenadel so as to entirely satisfy myself as to his mental condition ; but after the long and painful conversation which I held with him, after what my friend M. Grandsault had told me, after what has been said to me by the brother and sister-in-law of Glenadel, who are so much afflicted at the sad condition of their unfortunate brother, I became well convinced, without farther observation, that John Glenadel was affected with that form of insanity called monomania, characterised in his case by an irresistible inclination to murder ; the monomania with which Papavoine and others, fortunately but a small number were affected.

"Signed at Brunet, in the commune of Marminiat.

"CALMEILLES, Health Officer."

May 21, 1839.

We have no desire to change a word of this, rendered so eloquent by its very simplicity. We do not think any farther remark necessary, and we will therefore restrict ourselves to the single statement, that this insanity continued during twenty-six years, and that for twenty years Glenadel was able by his own power, to resist the impulsions which

persecuted him, and to preserve all the appearances of a man of entirely sound mind.

The following case, though differing in many respects from others which are cited, shows that one fixed idea may persist for a long term of years, without producing any other mental disturbance, and in a patient who has preserved in the eyes of all, an appearance of the most perfect reason.

Augusta Wilhelmine Strohm, thirty years of age, having never presented any appearance of melancholy, without appreciable motive, killed, with a blow of a hatchet, one of her friends whom she had invited to her house. She immediately afterwards gave herself up to a police officer. Marc, after having reported this case in detail, continues thus : "When *quite young*, Augusta Strohm was present at Dresden, at the execution of a person named Schaefer, sentenced to death for assassination. The preparations for the execution, the procession to the scaffold, all produced upon Augusta Strohm such an impression, that from this moment she regarded it as the great and most desirable object of her existence, to be able to terminate her life in the same manner ; that is to say, to be prepared for death in the same way, and to close her life in as exemplary a manner as she who was condemned. *This thought never left her ; but her moral principles for a long time struggled against it*, until, about six months previous to the event we are about to mention, the execution of an assassin, named Kultafen, took place at Dresden, &c.

This second execution, by the circumstances with which it was accompanied, again made a very strong impression upon the girl Strohm, and sufficed to arouse the former idea which she had retained, and to impel this girl to the commission of murder. Strohm was *quite young* when she was present at the execution, from which dates the origin of her fixed idea. It is therefore probable, that for at least fifteen years, did this fixed idea persist without producing any other disturbance of the mind, the patient preserving all the appearances of reason, notwithstanding the mental struggles she endured.

It is **very** certain that if this kind of monomania is capable of being aggravated, it ought also sometimes to be recovered from, without passing the strict limits we here indicate. An attending disease or a fortunate occurrence might very well produce this result. We might mention many persons, who for two months or more, have entertained thoughts of suicide or homicide, and from whom this symptom has spontaneously disappeared, without leaving the least trace. These persons have not told of what they had experienced, before their recovery, and no one can doubt but that the majority of these cases pass unrecognized.

All that we say of instinctive monomania, applies with equal force to intellectual monomania.

A physician, forty-five or fifty years of age, came to me once to make known the fear he had of becoming insane, and to seek my counsel. He first informed me that many of his relatives were subject to attacks of insanity, and that he himself had for more than ten years, been pursued by fixed ideas, the nature of which he correctly appreciated, but of which it was impossible for him to free himself.

These ideas were not always the same, but each one of them had persisted for *many years*. Thus for a long time he could not avoid looking at the prominence in the garments produced by the male organs of generation; which inclination gave him much uneasiness lest he should be suspected of corrupt morals.

Afterwards he was persecuted by the impression that he was constantly insulted, and that every one who coughed or blew his nose by the side of him in the street, wished to impose upon him.

Notwithstanding these ideas, he continued to fulfil all the duties imposed upon him by numerous patients, and to pass in the eyes of all, as a rational man. I have been since informed, that his insanity has transcended the strict limits here mentioned, and that this physician has become completely insane.

I have attended for three months an English woman, whose brother has been affected with mental disease, and who herself has been beset by a fixed idea from which she has in vain strove to free herself, and to which she constantly recurs, though she well knows it to be unreasonable. This idea is the fear, *that she does not sufficiently love her husband*. For three months I have looked in vain for any other trace of intellectual disorder. This woman, twenty-seven years of age, presents all the appearances of the most perfect reason; nevertheless a hundred times every day, she finds herself in spite of her resistance to it, recurring to this idea, which she comments upon and explains in every way. This state has already continued for three years, without the insanity being in the least extended.

We see from these cases, that monomania may persist for three, ten, fifteen and even twenty years, without being marked by any insane act; the patients struggle against their ideas, but are able to maintain command of themselves in the midst of the world.

Cases of this kind are not uncommon. How many patients do we meet with, who have been affected with a partial delirium or mania, who before coming completely insane, have been for many years tormented with one fixed idea, which they have by great care, been able to conceal! They are much mistaken, who believe that all monomaniacs are placed in asylums for the insane. On the other hand, they can be convinced that the great majority continue to live with the world, and it is precisely to these that the disease is clearly limited. After the establishment of the society for the care of the insane, I was, as a member of this society, called to see many patients who had been discharged from Salpetriere and Bicetre, who retained these fixed ideas. Notwithstanding these ideas, these patients always conducted with the utmost propriety. One laboring woman believed that the person by whom she was employed, entered her chamber during her absence, and threw in mercury and other noxious substances; nevertheless, she had the power

to conceal this delusion, she made no complaints, and affairs might have continued in this state for a long time, had not her disease been aggravated. The day on which this aggravation took place, this woman was transported with rage, recounted her injuries, and will have to be again secluded. All persons who have thoughts of suicide, do not kill themselves nor make attempts to do it, and it is certain that many patients, although tormented by these fixed ideas, maintain themselves as to all their actions, within the confines of the most perfect reason. This is not true of maniacs, the demented, nor of those who have hallucinations.

We think that monomania in its most simple form, is more frequent than is generally believed, from this one consideration, that this variety of insanity often persists for many years, without producing irrational acts, the patients being able commonly to remain in society, where they escape the observation of the physician.

ARTICLE III.

CASE OF ALLEDGED LUNACY.

Communicated by AMOS DEAN, Esq. of Albany, N. Y.

During the month of March last, the Chancellor on application for that purpose, issued a commission *De Lunatico Inquirendo* directed to Amos Dean, Alden Marsh, M. D., and Peter McNaughton, M. D., directing them by the oaths of twelve men to inquire into the alledged lunacy of A. B. of the city of Albany, and whether he was sufficient for the government of himself or for the management of his property.

On the execution of that commission, a number of witnesses were sworn, mostly clergymen of the city of Albany, and others of high respectability, as to communications made