

ON THE MEDICAL EVIDENCE GIVEN BEFORE THE COURT OF CHANCERY IN THE CASE OF DYCE SOMBRE, ESQ.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In forwarding for publication in your valuable journal a few remarks on the medical evidence which was the sole cause of the late prolonged inquiry, before the Court of Chancery, into the present state of mind of D. O. Dyce Sombre, Esq., I think it right to mention that I have had special opportunities to become acquainted with the exact particulars of that gentleman's case, from my having been appointed, by Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst, in 1844, to travel with Mr. Dyce Sombre as his medical attendant.

I hope that the above preface will enable the Editor to publish my letter, and remain, Sir, your obedient servant,
Clapham-road, April, 1849. JOHN WARWICK, M.R.C.S.E.

I presume that the majority of your readers are acquainted with the outlines of the Dyce Sombre case, as detailed from time to time in the newspaper reports of proceedings in the Court of Chancery. They will remember that an inquest was held, in July, 1843, to try the state of Mr. Dyce Sombre's mind, and a verdict of insanity returned. In the year 1844, a petition for a supersedeas was presented, and after five days' hearing, dismissed, by Lord Lyndhurst, in a most elaborate analytical judgment, (Aug. 8, 1844.) Since that decision a great number of affidavits, made by medical practitioners in different parts of Europe, have from time to time been filed, all of them more or less in favour of Mr. Dyce Sombre's sanity.

To test the value of these foreign affidavits, the Lord Chancellor, at certain intervals, has ordered the lunatic to come to England, for the purpose of having his state of mind inquired into here. The last of these inquiries took place in November, 1848, and was conducted by a medical commission, composed of Drs. Bright and Southey, the physicians usually consulted by the Lord Chancellor, Sir James Clark, on the part of the committees of the person, and Dr. Martin, on the part of Mr. Dyce Sombre. This commission came to the unanimous conclusion, that he is still of unsound mind, "and quite unfit to be trusted with the management of his own affairs."

Mr. Dyce Sombre and his friends, not feeling satisfied with this decision, immediately selected a counter-commission, consisting of Sir Alexander Morison, Drs. Paris, Copland, Ferguson, Mayo, and Costello. These six gentlemen, after repeated interviews, singly and together, with Mr. Dyce Sombre, and five consultations with each other, and numerous communications with Mr. Dyce Sombre's friends, unanimously decided that there is "no evidence whatever that he labours under unsoundness of mind;" and that "the commission of lunacy under which he is controlled ought to be immediately superseded."

The several considerations which induced the six gentlemen selected by the lunatic to come to a conclusion diametrically opposed to that arrived at by the Lord Chancellor's referees are stated at length in the Report of the former, dated Mivart's Hotel, Dec. 24, 1848. In that Report, the main delusions asserted to have been manifested by Mr. Dyce Sombre, during the last three years, are classed under six heads, discussed seriatim, and in turn dismissed as neither "unnatural nor unfounded." The Report then proceeds as follows:—

"There is, however, another suspicion entertained by him, which has demanded and received our serious consideration, in reference to the question before us—we allude to his charge against the East India Company of tampering with his wife and her father, with a view to the infidelity of the former. The following is the result of our consideration. If suspicions to this effect and extent had obtained, and kept possession of the mind of a person educated exclusively in European notions and habits, we might, perhaps, have given them some weight as evidence of insanity, even in the absence of all other proof. If they spring up in the mind of one born and bred in countries in which incest is common, and treachery habitual—in the mind of one having special grounds of irritation, and the most intense dislike to the parties against whom he entertains the suspicions—if these suspicions should spring up and take root in a mind thus constituted, we should view them as harmonizing with it completely, and in strict conformity to its laws. Such, my lord, is the case—and such the character of Colonel Dyce Sombre. The impression, no doubt a delusive one, to which

we are referring, arose in his mind during the period in which he was treated as insane. It entirely falls in with our experience that delusive opinions thus formed and thus strengthened may survive the insane state; and we are of opinion that we should act with very great injustice if we should consign a patient to a madhouse on the ground of his continuing to assert one morbid impression, when the entire context of his character indicates sanity."

From the commencement of the above paragraph, it appears that the six physicians found that Mr. Dyce Sombre still entertained a suspicion of a horrible intercourse having taken place between his wife and her father, at the instigation of the East India Company. Here, then, is a positive delusion of a most monstrous character, affecting two individuals and a corporate body—viz., the Honourable Mrs. Dyce Sombre, the Viscount St. Vincent, and the East India Company; the grave nature of which delusion induced the six physicians to give it their "serious consideration." The following is the result of their consideration:—If an Englishman, born and bred in this country, should openly express a belief that the directors of the East India Company had, for interested purposes, effectively promoted and brought about an incestuous intercourse between an English nobleman and his daughter, then, in that case, they (the six physicians) might *perhaps* consider such a notion strange and unfounded, and "give it some weight as evidence of insanity;" but that they do not consider it at all remarkable for such a delusion to originate in the mind of a gentleman born in India—(although that gentleman is half European by descent, was educated in the house of an English clergyman, married to an English wife, with English children for companions; was in the constant habit of associating with the civil and military officers of the East India Company's service; was remarkable in India for always dressing like an Englishman; is perfect master of the English language; mixed for a time in the best English society, and once represented an English borough in Parliament.) And the reasons they give for not considering this horrible delusion any evidence of this gentleman's insanity are—firstly, "that in the East treachery is habitual, and incest common;" and secondly, that the unfortunate gentleman had "special grounds of irritation, and the most intense dislike to the parties against whom he entertains the suspicions."

Furthermore, these six gentlemen not only see nothing extraordinary in Mr. Dyce Sombre entertaining this delusion, but regard it as a natural result, "harmonizing completely and in strict conformity" with their views of his case. In other words, they think it quite natural for an Asiatic having "grounds of irritation and intense dislike" to an Englishman to accuse him of any abominable crime. The paragraph continues: "the impression, no doubt a delusive one, arose in his mind during the period in which Mr. Dyce Sombre was treated as insane."

The period in which Mr. Dyce Sombre was treated as insane extended only from March to September 1843; since that time he has never submitted to any control or treatment whatever. But there is no evidence that the compound delusion referred to existed at that time, for there was no mention made of it in the proceedings before the court in 1844, nor is it alluded to in Lord Lyndhurst's most elaborate judgment. It is true that Mr. Dyce Sombre at that time entertained a delusion relating to the East India Company, and also another delusion respecting the conduct of his wife with her own father; but these existed in his mind as distinct and separate impressions, and were not coupled together by him before the year 1845. The circumstances which explain the association of the two delusions, and the mingling together of them in Mr. Dyce Sombre's mind, have not as yet been mentioned, but as I am personally acquainted with these circumstances, I will here relate them:—When Mr. Dyce Sombre was at St. Petersburg, in 1845, certain persons in authority thought fit to regard him as a political victim. He was noticed, fêted, questioned, and commiserated in that character. Then and there commenced the association of the two delusions; but it was not complete; at least there was no evidence that it was completed, until Mr. Dyce Sombre's visit to Warsaw, about the end of April, 1845, when, for the first time, he fully detailed the circumstances to some Russian officers whilst at dinner at a Restaurant's. The particulars were as follows:—Mr. Dyce Sombre asserted that he was a native Indian prince, unjustly deprived of his rule and territory by the treachery of the East India Company. That after his deposition, he had proceeded to England, retaining only his private fortune. That the East India Company, in the design to obtain possession of the remains of his property, had seduced and inveigled him into a marriage with a beau-

tiful but debauched woman of rank—that the Company had next brought about an incestuous intercourse between his wife and her own father; and that when he accused the parties of the crime he was declared mad, deprived of his property, and placed in confinement; and thus that his marriage, the incest, his alleged madness, the confiscation of his fortune, and his imprisonment, were the consecutive results of one continuous plot directed against him by the East India Company. This story was readily credited by the Russians, ever envious and jealous of our Indian supremacy, and obtained for Mr. Dyce Sombre much attention and sympathy. But to return to the Report:—

The six physicians, after assuming that the delusion under consideration arose in Mr. Dyce Sombre's mind "during the period in which he was treated as insane," continue as follows:—"It entirely falls in with our experience, that delusive opinions thus formed and strengthened may survive the insane state"—a doctrine, as Lord Cottenham observed, entirely new, and which is the main subject of my present communication. For if I rightly understand these gentlemen, they mean to assure the Lord Chancellor that the persistence of delusive opinions in a madman is no proof of his insanity; that a person may have insane ideas, and yet be sane. For a delusive opinion, "formed and strengthened" during "the insane state," must be an insane opinion; yet Drs. Morison, Paris, Ferguson, Copland, Costello, and Mayo, collectively and individually make oath and say, that the continuance of an insane opinion so formed is no proof of insanity. They say, that an insane opinion may survive the insane state. What, then, constitutes insanity? How are we to distinguish unsoundness of mind?—how decide upon the recovery of a lunatic? Do these gentlemen mean to assert that the first insane delusion is the sole symptom to which any importance can be attached? Are we in future to consider a lunatic insane only so long as the primary delusion predominates in his mind? Dr. Prichard, however, says: "The dominant illusion, in consideration of which several writers lay so much stress, is ever liable to change as to its subject. If you get rid of one chimera, another takes its place; and thus particular illusions, however limited, may succeed each other without end."

This opinion will, I believe, be found to coincide with the experience of all who have studied mental aberration; and such being the case, I again ask, how are we to determine the duration of continued insanity, if it be true that "insane opinions may survive the insane state"? The point in question has nothing to do with the treatment of the disorder—it is one simply of diagnosis. The doctrine that insane delusions originating in an insane mind may survive the insane state, is so novel, so subtle, and so important in a social, medical, and medico-legal point of view, that I earnestly invite the gentlemen by whom it is now for the first time enunciated, to furnish the profession with a full elucidation of its meaning and application. The Report then goes on to say, "We are of opinion that we should act with very great injustice if we should consign a patient to a madhouse, on the ground of his continuing to assert one morbid impression, when the entire context of his character indicated sanity." This opinion has a special bearing on the treatment of lunatics affected with monomania, and if carried into practice, would insure the immediate discharge of many unfortunate persons now under confinement for this form of mental disorder. But until the six physicians above quoted shall please to enlighten us with their new views on this subject, I fear we shall continue to act on the former advice of Dr. Paris:—"It may safely be taken as a rule, that persons labouring under limited, will be predisposed to general insanity, and therefore it is at least necessary to watch them minutely, lest some less harmless derangement should seize them at the moment when it is least expected."

ON THE PAPILLÆ OF THE TONGUE.

By BENJAMIN RIDGE, M.D., M.R.C.S., &c., Putney.

IN THE LANCET of March 3rd, Dr. Hassall has alluded to this subject, and says that the papillæ are "cupped in form," that "each compound papillæ is made up in a circle, the boundary of which corresponds with the raised margin of each cup;" that "the cavities of the papillæ receive the nutritious juices, and retain them for a time sufficiently long to produce the necessary impression on the sensory papillæ by which each cup is encircled;" that "the term conical, as applied to certain papillæ of that organ, is a misnomer, and that these are excavated, and cupped in form."

In my published paper on "Glossology," as I have alluded

to all these points, I beg to refer Dr. Hassall to page 46 of that work. Speaking of the dorsum of the tongue, I stated that the *papillæ lenticulares vel capitatae*, which are situated at the posterior third of the tongue, "appear like a cup and basin," and that they were follicular. Also, that these are so distinctly different to the arterial papillæ on the gustatory portion of the tongue, (or anterior two-thirds,) that it would not be unwise to re-name them according to their uses, to prevent confusion. Their designation under the head of papillæ, infers that they are all of the same nature." (p. 47.)

"The *papillæ fungiformes* are very numerous; they present rounded heads, and thin necks, and arise out of a small fosse, or ditch." (p. 47.)

"The *papillæ conicæ* are very numerous," &c. "At the tip (of the tongue) they form clusters, and present occasionally, in scarlet fever, a tasselled appearance at the point of the tongue."

"These two last-named classes of papillæ are different from the *papillæ lenticulares*; these, we have every reason to believe, are follicles for the secretion of mucus, consequently, glands of the smallest degree. The latter, on the gustatory portion of the tongue, are generally supposed to be terminations of nerves, which, however, is not true. Nerves are white throughout, and do not alter in colour at their terminations more than in their centre. Now these are evidently red; and I believe them to be arterial termini, having a more or less conical, flat, or bulbous shape, arising out of a ditch, or fosse, at which point the nervous filaments from the gustatory terminate."

"Physiologists have considered the papillæ to be terminations of nerves; for this reason: on placing any pungent, sapid body on them, it has become instantly apparent to the taste; whilst if the same had been placed on any other part of the tongue, it would not have been so soon perceptible. The reason is this: taste is keener during a moist state of the tongue than when it is dry. If a single grain of salt is placed on the top of one of the papillæ, the saliva or moisture instantly dissolves it, and it flows in a sapid form into the fosse; the distance is not so great but that it is momentary. If a grain of any salt is placed on another part of the tongue, it becomes immediately dissolved, and flows, with the saliva, through the pile, into the fosse, at the base of the papillæ, and is there appreciated. If the papillæ were nervous terminations, this sapid substance would have to flow to the top of them before taste could be apparent."

"Again: Nature would be unwise to place so delicate a structure as the termination of a nerve in so prominent a position, when so many substances are put into the mouth, either too hot or too cold, the sensation from which would be a thousand times more painful than it is, if the nerves terminated here. The more we examine Nature, the more we must wonder at her wisdom. Without lessening the power of taste, how beautifully she protects the sense, by furnishing it with a nourishing fabric, and by surrounding the fosse with a villous or pilous coat, whilst the arterial bulb is capable of contraction within it, or elongation through it; and how admirably she provides it with a constant supply of moisture, to dissolve solid substances, rendering them in a fit condition to be tasted?"—pp. 47, 48.

Dr. Hassall is therefore correct in saying: "Considered altogether, it would be difficult to imagine or devise an arrangement of parts more admirably adapted to the purpose to be fulfilled."

These are not the days for any original author to allow himself to be forestalled; and I am sure Dr. Hassall will allow me priority over him in the observations he has made on the papillæ of the tongue.

Putney, March, 1849.

Reviews.

Observations on Natural Systems of Botany. By JAMES L. DRUMMOND, M.D., Professor of Anatomy and Physiology, Belfast, &c. London: Longman. 1849. pp. 100.

THE author of this brief treatise has entered the lists as an upholder of the Linnæan, or sexual, in opposition to the natural, system of botany, as now understood; and the treatise may be characterized as a philippic against Dr. Lindley's much-valued work, "The Vegetable Kingdom," or rather, against the system of classification adopted in it, and to which is affixed the title of "The Natural System."

Now, although we may coincide with many of the criticisms