

would seem to have been used almost synonymously by Lords Coke and Hale.

The loss of the control of the *will* over *volition*, is a condition easily made manifest by familiar facts and occurrences; and the examples above include every case of *doubtful and disputed insanity*.

The most eminent jurists have widely differed—Lord Mansfield from Lord Erskine and Sir Joseph Jekyll: the earnest and conscientious conviction of Lord Denman, solemnly expressed from the bench, denying the possibility of the *existence of insanity without delusions*, within a few months was as formally and explicitly contradicted by Lord Campbell and Justice Maule; Lord Eldon as entirely opposed Lord Thurlow in the celebrated Portsmouth case; and Sir Joseph Jekyll took a different and more comprehensive view than the other jurists in the Duchess of Cleveland's case, holding "that the law will not *measure* the size of men's minds, so as they be *compos mentis*," directly opposed to Lord Mansfield's opinion, which requires a *measure* equal to "the knowledge of right and wrong, good and evil." Unfortunately, names of eminence amongst medical men are arrayed as the advocates of entirely opposite opinions, and these schisms are manifested by the highest order of intellect.

The law has not found insanity a plastic material, upon which it could impress enduring edicts and formulary *dicta*. The physician, persuaded to consider insanity a legal and not a physiological question, fully impressed with its inherent difficulties, timidly approaches the subject, alarmed when called upon to view it through the medium of another science, with the mysteries of which he is totally unacquainted, and its relevancy to the investigation he cannot comprehend.

Hale, Lyttleton, Coke, Blackstone, Mansfield, Erskine, Denman, Eldon, Thurlow, Lyndhurst, and Brougham, have judicially reviewed and decided every condition of insanity—a phalanx of learning and authority rarely brought to the consideration of any question. The bench is proverbial for the calmness with which it weighs its decisions, and its awards upon all strictly legal inquiries carry the unimpassioned authority of the ancient oracles; but unsustained by the power within itself, and exerting it nevertheless to restrain *truth* within legal trammels and technical forms, it has issued contradictory *dicta*; and in the attempt to subject the laws of nature to the obedience of precedents, her illimitable forces and influences being at best only partially revealed through the feeble insight of science, have evaded the astuteness of the bench.

The tessellated character of our common and statute law is a mosaic illustrated by the learning, uprightiness, and wisdom of the constitutional judges who have adorned the courts; but its edicts are fickle and varying, guided by no principle, and no general rules, or general rules derived only from particular cases and decisions. It has no written text; settled cases, custom, tradition, and authority prevail; each fresh case that does not precisely tally with another forms a new section in this shifting and slippery code. The forms and rules of the courts raise disputed questions, through which, nevertheless, are determined the irregularities and false judgments which spring up in its bosom; and bench decisions have the force, and assume the dignity of legislative enactments. Lawyers easily and may well blunder upon so uncongenial a subject as insanity, and should hand it over to a *physiological court of inquiry*. In a State where the exigencies of commerce, the enterprising habits induced by manufactures, mechanical skill, and invention, constant impetus is given to the legislature to meet this or that contingency, induced by so versatile and ever-changing a condition—where landmarks are removed to accommodate new incidents and new circumstances, to the wants of an energetic and progressive community—*physiological investigations should form no part of the jurisprudence of the courts of law*.

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AMAUROSIS PRECEDED BY HÆMATEMESIS.

By MICHAEL O'REILLY, Esq., Bishop's Stortford.

I HAVE read with no small degree of interest, in THE LANCET of the 28th ultimo, a case of "Sudden Amaurosis preceded by Hæmatemesis," under the treatment of Mr. Lawrence, of St. Bartholomew's Hospital; and as it so nearly simulates to one which came under my care some four years since, and from the peculiarity of cause and effect, perhaps you may deem it worth a place in your widely-circulated periodical. Thomas B—, aged fifty, labourer, the father of several children, of very quiet and temperate habits,

was seized, while at work, with a sudden attack of hæmatemesis, and ejected from the stomach full three pints of dark-clotted blood, without the slightest pain or uneasiness. He was taken home, and I saw him within an hour of the attack. He appeared cold and cadaverous, and to all appearance in articulo mortis. I put him on the antiphlogistic treatment. He continued, however, for several days, and at short intervals, to eject small quantities of dark, grumous, semi-sanguineous-looking matter; and notwithstanding every effort, the poor man became, and has continued up to this time, completely amaurotic. As a matter of course, considerable debility followed, which was attended to in the usual way, and in a manner perfectly similar to the one to which I have alluded. I may here observe, that when he became convalescent, he took the advantage of London advice, and was recommended to the Eye Institution at Moorfields, where the treatment was merely a repetition of what had already been done. The poor fellow returned, and is now to be seen daily reconnoitring in our streets, guided by one of his children, and in total oblivion to the light of this glorious creation.

In looking over various authorities on disease of the eye, I cannot discover any mention made of a case in any way similar to the foregoing. Beer tells us that a diminution, or a total loss of sight, immediately depends upon a morbid state of the retina and optic nerve, whether this exist as the only defect or be complicated with other mischief, whether it be a primary affection or a secondary one, induced by previous disease of other parts of the eye. Quoting from the same authority, he goes on to say:—"For every grey or blue eye affected with amaurosis, there are five-and-twenty or thirty black or brown ones diseased." Now, the subject of this communication has blue eyes.

Again, Mr. Lawrence, in his Lectures, goes on to say:—"Those who have considered amaurosis to arise from debilitating causes, have considered that debility and atony of the nerve may be produced by all those circumstances which debilitate the system generally, such as loss of blood from profuse hæmorrhage, diarrhœa, copious salivation, &c. I have never," says Mr. Lawrence, "seen amaurosis produced by such causes." Now here are two cases which clearly establish the contrary. A man in the full enjoyment of health, and without any cerebral or other affection, is seized with hæmorrhage, and from that very moment becomes totally blind. We frequently find amaurosis arising from constitutional debility, proceeding from impairment of the nerves, or concussion of the brain or spinal column; but in this case there was an entire absence of any predisposing cause. His mind has never been in the slightest affected. The iris has lost all its movability, and the pupil remains glaring, dilated, and, from all appearance, is likely to continue so all the poor man's lifetime. I have abstained from going into many particulars which strike me in reference to the peculiarity of this case, my object being, if possible, to elicit from some of your numerous and enlightened readers a clear pathological exposition as to the cause and effect.

Bishop's Stortford, March, 1852.

A TUMOUR CONTAINING EARTHY MATTER SITUATED IN THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PLACENTA.

By ROBERT HARPER, Esq., M.R.C.S.E.

HAVING read Mr. I. B. Brown's case of "Calcification of Fibrous Tumour of Uterus," I am induced to send you the particulars of a case (copied from my note-book) of tumour in the substance of the placenta, containing earthy matter.

S. H—, aged twenty-five, the mother of three children, was seized with labour pains on the evening of March 29, 1850. Nothing untoward presented itself, and the child was born in about two hours. The placenta, however, did not follow, and after the lapse of an hour, as many very large clots of blood were expelled, I introduced my hand and found the placenta partly thrown off, but a part still rather firmly adherent to the fundus; this I peeled off, and brought the whole away, but in doing this I felt a hard substance, about the size of a hen's egg, in the substance of the placenta; the outside felt firm and appeared to be fibrous, and upon cutting into it, I found it to contain a quantity of earthy matter, in appearance like dry mortar, and which readily crumbled between the finger and thumb. The placenta was the usual size. The woman had no unfavourable symptoms follow, but had complained of great and constant pain in one spot, referred to the situation of the fundus uteri, for three months before delivery. She has since had another child.

Farringdon-street, 1852.