

called mania transitoria. Similar circumstances affect many of the more chronic conditions of mental perversion. But enough has been said to show that practically the fact of a man becoming a lunatic from a public point of view, depends greatly on whether the nature of his surroundings makes it necessary that he should be treated as one. And this again depends as much on the nature of the surroundings as on the condition of the individual himself. And, paradoxical as it may seem, in some cases it may be said with truth that the decision of the question whether a particular individual is or is not to be counted as a lunatic from the social point of view, depends more on the mental condition of his friends than on his own.

If then we were to attempt to reply in one sentence to the question, What condition does society regard as insanity? we should say, it is any mental abnormality recognised as a result of disease or defective development which renders an individual in the particular circumstances in which he is placed either dangerous to, or a disturber of order in, the community, or incapable of performing the duties required of him in his position. The amount of abnormality here implied, will vary according to the time and place in which the individual lives, the duties he may be called upon to perform, and the condition of the community by which he is surrounded.

Spurious Hydrophobia in Man. By W. LAUDER LINDSAY, M.D.,
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There is probably no disease to which human flesh is heir that attracts, every now and again, such a degree of public attention—that begets such a keenness of personal dread—that so frequently forms the subject of sensational narrative or comment in the public press—that causes to be exhibited so disgraceful an amount and kind of ignorance, superstition, credulity, and cruelty—as hydrophobia. Even cholera is not so formidable a disorder in the public esteem. Its cramps are not always present; and when they are, they are not comparable with the convulsions of hydrophobia. Nor is there any terrifying mental disorder in the case of cholera; whereas, in hydrophobia the *morbid mental phenomena* are more prominent, serious, and impressive than the motor

ones. Moreover, cholera is not popularly believed to be necessarily and in all cases fatal; whereas it is currently supposed that there is no chance of escape from hydrophobia.

It is not, perhaps, surprising that, under such circumstances, whenever two or three cases of hydrophobia—real or alleged—have occurred, or are said to have occurred, in a town or district, a *popular panic* is apt to arise. Such a panic may be said to exist at present in London; it did so in the same city in 1874;* it has done so there on several occasions of late years. Last year a similar panic occurred in Glasgow—one that led to such municipal errors, in the wholesale slaughter of poor inoffending dogs, as I have already elsewhere described.† And such panics have been common in Birmingham and other central county towns of England of late years.

Of the nature and extent of the present hydrophobia panic in London let the "Pall Mall Gazette"‡ testify. In an excellent common-sense article, entitled "The Mania for Hydrophobia," it made the following statement in November last:—"An epidemic of nervous panic has been set up by hearing or reading *sensational newspaper reports*. If one case is reported in to-day's paper, two or three more are sure to follow. And so it goes on, and may do until the panic has worn itself out, or the newspapers have something else to write about." . . . "In the present excited state of feeling, people write as if the very presence of dogs among us is incompatible with the welfare of civilised mankind."

In the "Illustrated London News," too, of the same month,§ the versatile author, G. A. Sala, thus wrote:—"A tide of cruelty to animals seems to be steadily setting in, and it should be stemmed very sternly. The hydrophobia scare is leading to cruelty to dogs by unnecessary muzzling and confining them, and by assuming them to be mad, when it is only we who are half out of our wits with morbid dread of a malady, the prevalence of which I believe to be exaggerated. These *epidemics* of nervous affright seem to be recurrent. I remember a fearful hydrophobia scare when I was quite a

* There was an epidemic both of canine rabies and human hydrophobia in London in the spring of 1874; the particulars of which were described in the "Daily Telegraph" about the beginning of May of that year.

† In a paper on "The Pathology of Mind in the Lower Animals:" "Journal of Mental Science," April, 1877, p. 18.

‡ Of November 5, 1877, p. 10.

§ For November 10, 1877, p. 450.

little boy, and the grim stories that were told of Orders in Council authorising physicians to smother patients suffering from hydrophobia between two feather beds." I remember myself* the same sort of stories about smothering; and were only law, ethics, theology, and public opinion to agree with De Quincey in regarding murder as one of the fine arts, there can be no question that so summary a process, or any equally efficient means of putting instant or speedy end to human life, would add to human happiness by terminating much useless human suffering.

We are constantly told that "history repeats itself." The same is true of certain forms at least of *mental epidemics*; they recur from time to time, as Sala points out, and their phenomena do not differ much from age to age. In other words, the mental "epidemics of the middle ages," as painted by Hecker, find their parallels in those of to-day. And of this fact there could scarcely be a better illustration than the hydrophobia panics of 1874, 1876, and 1877, which resemble in all essentials similar panics in 1760. Even at the present day—when we boast so much of our civilisation, education, culture, refinement, and so forth—and in the very midst of that highest civilisation, as it is represented in and by our great cities, we find as egregious a display of *ignorance, superstition, credulity and cruelty* in a hydrophobia panic as could have been found in a similar panic a century ago. These crude and base qualities of the public mind—so far as they are illustrated by hydrophobia scares or alarms—are to be found in the current belief among at least the lower orders of the community:—

1. That all biting, wild, or eccentric dogs are rabietic.
2. That their bite necessarily produces hydrophobia in man.
3. That if this hydrophobia is not to be fatal in the man the dog must be killed at once.
4. That all manners of quack specifics are to be relied on as cures.

"In 1760," we are told, "there was quite a panic in London and its neighbourhood, owing to the number of dogs

* But the belief on which such stories were founded has not by any means died out. So lately as 1871, I find the Unitarian clergyman of Mossley, whose case is mentioned in a subsequent part of the present paper, declaring, "I know that I shall have to be smothered" (*vide* "Narrative of Dr. Brumwell").

seized with madness.* Hundreds of dogs were destroyed, and none ever permitted to go about unmuzzled; while the newspapers of the day abounded in numerous receipts for the cure of hydrophobia—all of them as useless as the remedies recommended now †” “A dread of mad dogs,” says an essay published at the time (1760), “is the *epidemic terror* which now prevails, and the whole nation is at present actually groaning under the malignity of its influence. The people sally from their houses with that circumspection which is prudent in such as expect a mad dog at every turning. The physician publishes his prescription; the beadle prepares his halter; and a few (persons) of unusual bravery arm themselves with boots and buff gloves in order to face the enemy, if he should offer to attack them. In short, the whole people stand bravely on their defence, and seem by their present spirit to show a resolution of not being tamely bit by mad dogs any longer.” ‡

So far from having improved in public sense since 1760, the present hydrophobia panic (of 1877) shows that we have even retrograded. So far from there being “resolution,” or bravery, or a proper public spirit, there is a pusillanimous superstitious succumbing to what is supposed to be the inevitable. “Just now,” says again the “*Pall Mall Gazette*,” § “bitten people, being frightened, lose courage and expect to die, whether they have been cauterised or no. One person bitten by a dog (supposed to be mad), and afterwards cauterised, has died—possibly from hydrophobia, assuming there is such a disease and that the dog was really mad; but, also, far more probably, from the natural consequences of a wound deeply burned by artificial means. Therefore people have lost *faith* in a remedy which has hitherto hardly ever failed, and refuse to live under any circumstances.” Nor have hydrophobia-stricken patients acquired faith in any of the numerous other remedies—medical or surgical—that have been suggested as substitutes for cauterisation by hot iron or caustic, notwithstanding that every now and then the leading London newspapers open their columns to discussions

* Here and generally elsewhere throughout the present paper (in quotations), the term *madness* is used as a synonym for rabies. But that it really includes a number of other and diverse morbid conditions, I pointed out in a paper on “Madness in the Lower Animals,” in the “*Journal of Mental Science*” for July, 1871.

† “*Pall Mall Gazette*,” November 6, 1877, p. 5.

‡ Quoted in the “*Pall Mall Gazette*,” November 6, 1877, p. 5.

§ Of November 5, 1877, p. 10.

regarding the merits of alleged specifics—sometimes narrating wonderful “cures” of the kind to which the reading public was much better accustomed a couple of centuries ago. And other journals—both medical and veterinary, scientific and literary—have followed suit. Within a few months—in 1874—the “Times” and “Daily Telegraph,” the “Field” and the “British Medical Journal,” as well as the newspapers throughout the country generally, directed attention to the revival of what was in all probability a so-called “specific” a couple of centuries old, namely, the “Birling specific.” And gentlemen of the highest social status took a public part in the resultant discussion as to its value; for instance, the Honble. Grantley Berkeley, the Honble. and Rev. E. Bligh, the Rev. T. Cumming Macdonald, the Vicar of Birling, and Dr. Prince, then of Uckfield, Sussex. The only demonstrable result of that public discussion on the curability of hydrophobia, and on the relative merits of specifics in general, and of the Birling one in particular, was the exposure it afforded of the wonderful amount of ignorance and superstition, prejudice and credulity, that still exists even among members of the best educated and highest ranks of English society regarding a disease that has been for ages only too familiar. And, if this be the case among the educated and refined, what are we to expect from or among the illiterate and degraded, in whom for the most part hydrophobia itself is developed?

To the psychologist, hydrophobia is invested with the highest interest both of a scientific and practical kind; not only because—

1. Its *morbid mental phenomena* are prominent and peculiar, forming a group by themselves; nor on account of:—
2. Its giving rise to *epidemics of fear*, which in themselves form a serious study; but by reason of:—
3. Its furnishing one of the best examples that could be adduced of the wonderful influence of the *mind over the body*, and of morbid mental conditions in the generation of fatal physical disease. It does this in so far as many, I believe the majority, of the cases of hydrophobia are the direct fruit of morbid dread, which necessarily implies *morbid imagination*. And, further:—
4. It illustrates the influence of *imitation*, and, perhaps, also of *sympathy*, in the peculiar character of both the motor and mental phenomena in those forms of hydrophobia

which, having no connection with rabietic dogs—save an imaginary one—I have described and will speak of as “spurious.”

To a consideration of these spurious or dubious cases of hydrophobia I propose devoting the present paper, because I believe that, in proportion as it becomes realised, first by the medical profession and then by the general public, that much—probably most—of man’s hydrophobia is produced by his own morbid groundless *fears*, operating in minds of a low development, or in impressionable, excitable, nervous constitutions, so will the tendency to hydrophobia panics diminish and disappear. I can best, I think, illustrate what I have to say by citing a series of cases of hydrophobia, so-called—most of them fatal—in which

1. Either there was no dog bite whatever ;
2. Or the dog that inflicted the wound was not proved to be rabietic ;
3. Or was proved to be healthy ;
4. Or where the bite produced no wound.

I have never myself seen a case either of genuine rabies in the dog, or of hydrophobia in man. In Scotland, at least, I believe both to be *extremely rare*. For various reasons, I had long been on the outlook for an instance, especially of human hydrophobia, in order that I might make my own investigations into its natural history. I had, however, despaired of meeting with such a case in Scotland, and still more so in my own neighbourhood, when, in June, 1876, an alleged case of hydrophobia was sent to the Perth Infirmary. It was the cause of considerable excitement in town for some days—until indeed its real nature became apparent—for it proved to be a *spurious* case ; and it formed the subject of comment in the local and Dundee newspapers of the day.* I lost no time in visiting the patient in the infirmary, in conferring there with Dr. Cameron, the then House Surgeon, and in inquiring, in my own way, into the history and nature of the man’s illness. The patient was a common labourer, an illiterate Irishman, who was said to have “received a slight bite from a dog” about three weeks previously. “The affair so preyed upon his mind,” one newspaper account tells us, “that . . . he appeared to be in a *maniacal* state, and it was thought proper to remove him to the infirmary. He was quite quiet, however, shortly after his

* Of June 13, 1876.

admission ;” * while another report assured us, very properly, “that there were no symptoms of hydrophobia.” When visited by myself, in company with Dr. Cameron, there were neither mental nor motor, neither maniacal nor hydrophobic symptoms; and the case had all the aspect of malingering, such as is only too familiar to the house surgeons of general hospitals in all large cities. I found nothing but an indolent ulcer on one leg— an ulcer which the patient asserted was the immediate or direct result of the dog-bite. But other evidence collected by Dr. Cameron showed, or at least rendered it probable, that the ulcer in question was the result of the application of some chemical irritant, possibly applied with a view to destroy locally the effect of the bite; but just as possibly and probably in order to the production of a demonstrable sore that might be made the ground of a claim for damages against the dog’s owner. Such a claim was in fact made by the patient’s wife, an Irish woman, who would appear to have worried and frightened her husband for the moment out of his wits by her asseverations about hydrophobia and its results. This condition of *ephemeral mania*, however, subsided as soon as he was beyond his wife’s influence, viz., in the infirmary. When I pointed out to the man himself, while in hospital—

1. That possibly he had not been bitten at all, inasmuch as his trousers, stocking, and boot must have intervened between his skin and the dog’s tooth;

2. While a dog-bite, even where a demonstrable wound is produced, is not necessarily dangerous, and still less necessarily productive of hydrophobia—

he became much annoyed, and insisted that the immediate result of the bite was to make his leg black—an assertion quite sufficient to throw discredit on all his other statements. I came to the conclusion that neither his assertions nor his wife’s could be trusted, and that the case was not one worth further investigation.

In this case *popular superstition* was pandered to by shooting the dog, which was never, by the way, accused of having been “mad;” the animal being destroyed not so much in order to prevent hydrophobia in others, through its bite, as to obviate a fatal termination in this particular case. That such a summary destruction of a merely suspected

* “Dundee Courier,” of June 13, 1876.

animal—of a dog that merely bites, perhaps in self-defence—or even of a dog that may prove to be mad, in one sense or other—is an egregious mistake I cannot stop here fully to explain.

I found an Episcopal clergyman with the patient, administering, it is to be presumed, religious consolation or offering condolence—a line of treatment that, in such cases, is calculated to confirm the fallacious belief in the reality of a patient's illness. In such cases stern dealing, not gushing sympathy, is the sort of discipline required if we desire to repress and not to foster the tendency towards certain forms of spurious hydrophobia, and towards many forms of humbug that are far from being spurious.

In this particular instance, the patient's wife—a veritable Job's comforter—appears to have been the producer of the patient's whole illness, so far as there was any.

In the autumn of 1876, three instructive cases of a very different kind occurred in Glasgow. They were all fatal in hospital. What were, for our present purpose, the most important features of these cases, are contained in the following extracts from the newspapers of the day. Of one case, "it is stated that the primary symptoms.....were brought on by reading accounts in the newspapers of the last case of hydrophobia in Glasgow, a week or two ago. The particulars being brought to his recollection of the bite which he had received so long ago as the month of August, he allowed his mind to dwell on the circumstance, until he lapsed into a state of feverish and nervous irritability, followed by the symptoms"* of genuine hydrophobia, according to the authorities of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. Another account says, "The first indications of the disease appeared on his reading an account of death from hydrophobia."† It may be the same case to which Dr. Forrest, of Glasgow, referred, when he wrote some months subsequently:‡ "In the interval between the bite and the first symptoms of the malady, he read in the newspapers the account of the case of hydrophobia in Falkirk, and that upset him very much. It was never off his mind..... He became excited, frightened and talkative.....For several days he was in a condition of *acute mania*."

Again Professor Macleod stated publicly, in Glasgow, that "the most extraordinary thing was the great effect the *mind* had upon the disease.....The first patient in the infirmary

* "North British Daily Mail," October 24, 1876.

† "Scotsman," October 25, 1876.

‡ "British Medical Journal," January 27, 1877, p. 111.

had told him that he was perfectly well till one day he took up a newspaper and read of a man that had died from hydrophobia, and he was never of any use from that moment. The second told him exactly the same thing; and poor — informed him that his mind was haunted night and day till at last he had those extraordinary symptoms, which seemed really as much *mental* as bodily.*

What has come to be called a hydrophobia mania, panic, or scare, would appear to be as common in America as England. General nervousness on the subject amounts, in special cases (individuals), to a morbid dread, which is produced and fostered by the sensational newspaper reports of every instance of alleged or supposed hydrophobia in man, or of rabies in beast. Hence it happens that persons bit by dogs believe themselves doomed to hydrophobia. And they even go the length of supposing that they have been bitten; † in other words, genuine *delusions* of suspicion or fear are engendered.

Prominent in these cases in the causation of hydrophobia is the evil influence of *the Press* in publishing and disseminating terrifying accounts of fatal cases, with all their accompaniments. And the evil is a serious one, not confined to the single item of hydrophobia. It is notorious how by imitation, imagination and sympathy—all morbid in their character—the publication of murders and suicides—with all their sensational, pictorial or theatrical details—tends to multiply, not repress, such crimes against the body social or personal. But the evil is one of such magnitude that it demands a separate and special consideration.

Another patient in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary did well till a dog accidentally passed through the ward. “Immediately thereafter he started up in bed, with his arms extended and his eyes staring, his whole countenance indicating intense horror.....From that time he steadily grew worse.” We read of “convulsions caused by the appearance of the dog”..... “Being breathed upon and fanned with a towel—operations which always seem to excite hydrophobic patients,” he became “quite incoherent and *maniacal*” A bag of ice applied to his head had “the effect of making him outrageously wild, tossing about in bed, and talking incoherently.” ‡ Among

* “North British Daily Mail,” Dec. 14, 1876. A fuller account of Prof. Macleod’s views was given in the “British Medical Journal,” Dec. 23, 1876, p. 834.

† “Edinburgh Courant,” July 18, 1874.

‡ “Spectator,” as quoted by “North British Daily Mail,” of Feb. 12, 1877, reviewing the Glasgow cases as recorded in the “Lancet,” of Jan. 20 and 27, 1877.

the many absurd remedies that were long ago proposed for use in hydrophobia, was the homœopathic one of taking a hair of the dog that bit you. But in the above case the mere sight of a dog—not of *the* dog that had bitten the patient, if he was bitten at all—by awaking painful associations, or dire imaginations, was enough to determine an attack of the dreaded disease.

Even in Glasgow—the second largest city of the empire—in its Royal Infirmary, which is connected with the second largest medical school in Scotland, and where the patients were submitted to the most careful examination by a whole series of physicians and surgeons—no proper decision appears to have been come to as to whether the so-called hydrophobia in the three cases above-mentioned was the genuine disease; that is, a specific disorder arising from inoculation with the poisoned saliva of a rabietic dog. The Secretary of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary informed the alarmed public of that city, as regards two at least of the said patients, that they were “thought to be suffering from hydrophobia,” but that “grave doubts existed at the consultations held by the medical staff.....as to the true character of the disease..... The tests employed were entirely with a view of deciding the question in order to the adoption of the most appropriate treatment; and these tests were those recommended by the highest authorities.”*

In a fourth fatal instance in Glasgow, in the spring of 1877—this time in a girl—we are told—“The case is, in many respects a peculiar and painful one, and leaves considerable dubiety in the minds of the medical men, who, however, record death as the result of hydrophobia.”†

Before passing on to English cases, which are abundant, there is still one Scotch case deserving of notice. It created a good deal of excitement in Ayrshire in the summer of 1876, as the West Kilbride case. The patient, a woman, from the date of a dog-bite (on 31st May) to the date of her death (in the end of June), “had lived in nervous expectation of an attack of hydrophobia.” The dog was only “said to be rabid;” but as usual in such cases, it was shot as speedily as possible.‡ Though the wound inflicted by the dog healed, “she was subject to a good deal of nervous excitement, probably induced by injudicious people talking about it and its

* Letter in the “North British Daily Mail,” of Feb. 23, 1877.

† Same newspaper, of March 17, 1877.

‡ “Dundee Advertiser,” July 6, 1876.

consequences." She had gone to a railway station to meet a daughter, and "having slightly over-heated herself, became unwell that night, and the hydrophobic symptoms of thirst and dislike of water at once set in. These were followed by oppression about the region of the heart, and ultimately by extreme nervous excitement and *delirium*, final collapse" and death. "A blind husband was the object of much anxious consideration in her last moments."*

Here, as in so many other cases, there was no *diagnostic* sign or symptom of hydrophobia. Thirst is one of the commonest of all indications of deranged health, especially when it is attended by or gives rise to the slightest febrile disturbance. And it has been shown over and over again that in the genuine disease, whether in man or other animals, a dread of water is at least as frequently absent as present, so that it is, therefore, in no wise characteristic.

To be continued.

The Irish Lunatic Asylum Service.

In the "Journal of Mental Science" for April, 1876, a short account appeared of the present state of the Irish Lunatic Asylum Service and the action then being taken by Irish Medical Superintendents to obtain a more secure footing under Government, by ranking as Civil Servants. In order to gain this object, it would be necessary that the Executive should become their paymasters, and that their salaries, instead of coming from the rates, should be paid by the Treasury. Once secure of their position as Civil Servants, the rest would follow; their services would reckon, no matter how often changed from one asylum to another; they would no longer hold the anomalous position of men appointed by Government, responsible to central authority but paid by the ratepayers and as Civil Servants they would come under the Superannuation Act of 1859. Above all, they would become more closely connected with the Government, and obtain greater support and assistance in their official duties and in their attempts to further the study of mental disease in Ireland.

It is necessary to repeat these various reasons for the course pursued by Irish Superintendents, in which they have acted

* "North British Daily Mail," July 5, 1876, under the title, "Sad Case of Alleged Hydrophobia."