

OCCASIONAL NOTES OF THE QUARTER.

The Case of Isaac Brooks.

We record, with comments, the statement of Dr. Warrington, the medical attendant of Isaac Brooks, taken from "The British Medical Journal," Jan. 14th, 1882:—

"Isaac Brooks, single, aged 29, a small farmer and stonemason, was seen by me, at his own home at Rushton in Staffordshire, on December 5th, 1879, nine hours after he had received the following injury. The left testicle, with its more immediate covering, lay completely outside the middle of the left side of the scrotum, suspended by the cord, which was untouched. The testicle itself was uninjured. The wound through which it protruded appeared very small, and its edges clean cut. I returned it within the scrotum with some difficulty, without enlarging the wound. I then could observe that the wound was about one and a half to two inches in length, and had been made across the front surface of the scrotum. After replacing the organ, he had great pain in the left groin, extending upwards to the left loin, which lasted for half an hour, and was much relieved by hot fomentations. I inserted three sutures, and applied wet lint compress.

"Three days afterwards I removed the sutures, and the wound had healed. He had no pain, but the testis was swollen for some time afterwards. He soon regained his usual health, which was not robust, owing to valvular disease of the heart, which had existed since an attack of rheumatic fever fourteen years previously.

"His account to me was, that three men had committed this outrage on him, in the highway, about a quarter of a mile from his house. One pinned him from behind, pressing the knee into his back, and taking him off his legs; another man blindfolded him, and pressed strongly over his mouth; the third man operated on him. At first, he struggled very much, but soon he began to think more about getting his breath than anything else. He did not feel the cutting so much as when the organ was pressed out.

"To me he denied any identity of his assailants. At Leek, and at the Stafford assizes, he swore to the identity of two out of the three men. These men, Johnson and Clewes—farmers, and neighbours of his—were sentenced to ten years'

penal servitude. Neither before the magistrates nor at the assizes were any questions asked me, as to whether it was possible the injury could have been self-inflicted.

“On February 13th, 1881, I was sent for again to see Brooks, which I did fifteen hours after he had sustained another injury to the genital organs, but very different in character from the last. I found him lying in bed, bleeding from a wound which was very open, fully two inches in breadth at the lowest part of the scrotum, at right angles to the raphé, which divides it into two equal parts. The wound was deep, and the tissues around filled with clotted blood, the scrotum looking much swollen and dark-coloured. He told me that four men had attacked him in the same road as before. He tried to escape over a stone wall, but they caught him on the top of it. They stripped his trousers down, and inflicted the wound by a stab with a knife, or some sharp instrument. He bled very much at the time, but, by putting his handkerchief and pressing well, he managed to walk home. He found the bleeding had stopped. He went to bed, and during the night awoke finding that he was bleeding considerably, lying in a pool of blood which had run through the bed on to the floor. He called up his aged mother, who slept in an adjoining room. They applied cobwebs and tobacco, with pressure of cloths, &c., to the part; but, finding these did not stop the flow, they inserted a long pin through the tissues and twisted worsted round each end of it. This for the time stopped the hæmorrhage. During the day, bleeding recurred, and I was sent for. On February 14th, I was again summoned, as hæmorrhage had occurred again; they had inserted another pin in a similar manner during the night. Finding him in a very exhausted state from loss of blood, I persuaded him to become an in-patient of the Cottage Hospital at Congleton, under my care. He consented with reluctance, because I insisted upon having his permission to inform the authorities of the hospital as to the exact nature of the injury, and the cause of it. He wished it kept quiet. He had suffered so much mental distress in prosecuting in the first case; he was ashamed that it should be known he was injured in the genitals at all. To neither police, hospital committee, or myself would he ever vouchsafe any further information about the attack. No prosecution could, therefore, take place. He expressed to me a feeling of regret that he had prosecuted in the first affair, and considered that the men had been too heavily punished.

“He remained in the hospital about a month—the wound never bleeding again. It healed up slowly.

“After this second attack, owing partly to his loss of blood, &c., he never regained his average strength. I heard he was ill, and that he had become an in-patient of the North Staffordshire Infirmary last November.

“He sent for me again to visit him in December last, and I saw him for the last time on December 26th, 1881. He was very anæmic, had some slight amount of congestion of the lungs, and a little œdema of the legs. He was perfectly sensible. I informed his friends he was on his deathbed, and would not live many days.

“He died on December 31st, 1881. A few hours before death he confessed to an old friend of his, a neighbouring farmer, named Harrison, that he could not die comfortably, because two men, Johnson and Clewes, were innocent of the crime for which he transported them, and he wished them to be liberated. Harrison reduced this statement to writing, and Brooks signed it in the presence of his mother and brother, who were greatly astonished. This confession has naturally caused great sensation in the neighbourhood in which he lived; and as the public generally did not know of the exact nature of the injuries, and had never heard any details whatever of the second one, a very common impression had got abroad that both of them must have been self-inflicted.

“Brooks was a young man of reserved habits, in fact very reticent. He was fond of music and reading, frequently consulting an old fashioned encyclopædia which he possessed, and sometimes trying to surprise people by the use of very long words. He was in the habit of dancing well when he went from home, and his neighbours perhaps thought he aped the manners of his superiors too much. He was deliberate of speech and of action; he was rather better educated than his neighbours, and this, along with some of his habits, caused him to be quite an exceptional character amongst the rather rough, unmannered, hill-country farmers, amongst whom he dwelt. He was not by any means a favourite amongst them. His house was situated in a most lonely place and five miles from a town. I have heard since his death that he occasionally consulted fortune-tellers, and was even guided by them in his actions sometimes. I may mention that some of the farmers in the neighbourhood are in the habit of castrating their own cattle. As to the manner in which Brooks and his mother ingeniously

attempted and succeeded in stopping the hæmorrhage with a pin and worsted, such a practice is common when bleeding occurs in the wounds of cattle. I am not aware that Brooks had any morbid ideas with regard to his sexual organs. He once had a slight gonorrhœa about ten years ago. He did not seem more anxious about the matter than such persons usually are."

The report of this case is of great interest, and presents many and various points for examination.

We should at once say that though we may—after the whole case is complete—be surprised that insanity was not suspected after the first injury, we cannot accuse either doctors or lawyers of gross carelessness, the conduct of the young man and the truthful appearance of his tale might easily mislead even experts. But we consider that on the occurrence of a second similar injury that suspicion should have been aroused.

The consideration of the case should be preceded by the examination of cases in which self-mutilation does take place, and, secondly, of cases in which false accusations are made. It is not very uncommon to meet insane persons who have injured themselves, and in these the injuries are often of the sexual organs. In such cases the train of ideas is somewhat after this order:

First, a loss of control of the lower nervous centres, so that sexual excess, or abuse of some kind, has been indulged in; this may, in some cases, be the cause of the first mental disturbance, but, certainly, in many others, puberty, or some functional change in the reproductive organs, sets up desire which is not controlled—which cannot, in weak neurotic subjects, be resisted. This constant and exhausting strain increases nervous weakness, and the patients lose more and more their self-control; they become weak, and, like weak people generally, suspicious; their suspicion takes form; they imagine people talk about and look at them, and in this state they may become violent and dangerous.

There is another point of interest in such cases, and that is their impulsive nature; they are apt to do things suddenly and violently; they have, as we have said, lost more and more their self-control, and neither mind nor muscle seem to be under command. Such cases have also very commonly hallucinations of hearing; voices are heard, and they receive directions, or commands, or are driven by influences to do things which they are opposed to.

They often struggle long before they give way. Such cases feel that their habits of indulgence are injuring them, and that every time they give way, they are approaching their ruin; they brood over their ailments, and may become hypochondriacal, or they may take measures to reduce their desires by taking drugs, or if more irritable, may attempt to castrate themselves, and thus act, as they believe, in obedience to Scripture, and remove the offending member. Hence, such persons in the earlier stages of mental unsoundness, may injure themselves, and often do so by complete or partial castration.

The second question, as to false accusations—these are common enough, and in the *Journal*, recently, have been considered the difficult questions which may arise in such cases.

In cases, in whom the insanity is connected with sexual troubles, such accusations are among the most general. All of us are used to receive accusations about “tampering,” “playing up,” “playing tricks on,” “liberties being taken,” and the like, and know the tendency there is in these patients to be vindictive.

We should consider it as a fortunately rare combination to meet with such delusions, with such consistent conduct, as seen in the case of Farmer Brooks.

We have personally seen several patients who have injured themselves to a slight extent, and have accused others. We meet with this sometimes in weak-minded patients who either injuring themselves, or getting injured by accident, accuse some perfectly innocent person; in other cases a definite plan of lying and mischief-making seems to be the symptom of moral insanity.

In one girl we saw, this was associated with loss of common sensibility. She thrust pins across her eyelids, and accused the doctors of doing it.

And now for the case before us—we have no family history of insanity. The man was single, and lived a very subjective life; he was just the type of man in whom all the evils of civilization seem to accumulate, great sensibility, with loss of power of control, an emotional but ill-ruled machine. A solitary man, thinking himself misunderstood and neglected, building castles in the air, finding the times out of joint, and from this idea conceiving that he has enemies and persecutors.

This class of man is above his fellows in most points, but he never loses the idea that he is better; and just as

certainly as grace of movement is lost when the effort becomes manifest, so true culture is wanting when the assertion of it is present.

With a too subjective life followed idea of being misunderstood, and perhaps some idea about notoriety was an active agent also. "Voices," moral perversion due to sexual abuse may also have played a part.

An interesting case of attempted mutilation of the genital organs in a female will be found reported by Dr. Howden in the Clinical Notes and Cases.

Guiteau.

We had intended to comment upon the psychology of Guiteau, but defer doing so until we are in possession of more particulars. The papers sent to us, reporting medical evidence given at the trial, are imperfect, and the "American Journal of Insanity," which it is expected will contain a full report, has been delayed in consequence beyond the time of publication.

PART II.—REVIEWS.

A Treatise on the Diseases of the Nervous System. By JAMES ROSS, M.D., M.R.C.P. Lond., Assistant Physician to the Manchester Royal Infirmary, &c. *Illustrated with Lithographs, Photographs, and Two Hundred and Eighty Woodcuts.* Two Vols. London: Churchill.

Rarely indeed does a work so excellent in every way come under the notice of the reviewer; and it is with feelings of pleasure that we proceed to give some idea of the character and scope of this new treatise on Diseases of the Nervous System.

The work is a large one, and is designed to be comprehensive. It consists of two volumes, containing between them nearly sixteen hundred pages. It treats of all diseases of the nervous system except insanity.

It presents several noteworthy features. The arrangement, the illustrations, the matter, and the style, are all such as to deserve a few detailed remarks.

The first portion of the work, to the extent of about two hundred and eighty pages, is devoted to the general pathology