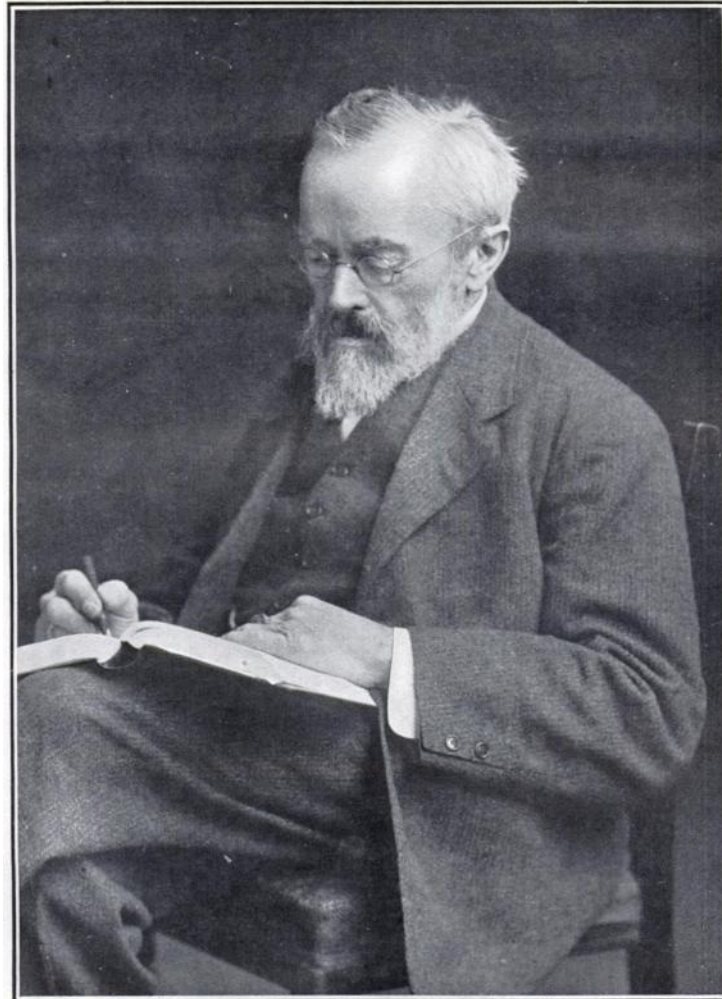


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CHARLES ARTHUR MERCIER.

M.D.LOND., F.R.C.P.LOND., F.R.C.S.ENG. B. 1852: D. 1919.

ONLY two years have passed since the death of one of the most eminent of our scientific interpreters and teachers in the province of mental diseases, and now another has gone from us whose intellectual power and rare attainments were in many respects strikingly comparable with those of Henry Maudsley. This likeness has doubtless been already noted by many. It struck me some thirty-five years ago, at the outset of my acquaintance with Mercier and some of his works and from my knowledge of Dr. Maudsley's writings, since the first edition of his *Physiology and Pathology of Mind* was published in 1867. But as the characteristics which these memorable men had in common have probably never been noted in print, I venture here to make brief mention of some of them. It would perhaps be as easy to draw a contrast as a comparison, especially as regards some of their philosophical views, their individual and social qualities, and their literary styles. But my personal knowledge of Dr. Maudsley was not intimate enough to fit me to speak on some of these points, and the others speak for themselves in each author's written works.

Both Maudsley and Mercier possessed in large measure the scientific mind, and their works were marked alike by a dominant determination to search out as thoroughly and explain as clearly and fully as their powers allowed the subject they had chosen for the chief labour of their lives. The terms they used were so clearly defined that their arguments left but few gaps for strictly logical criticism, however unacceptable by some their conclusions may have been. Both men were trenchant and alert in controversy, and, perhaps in part consequence, neither was always popular among those who were but slightly acquainted with them. In their wide and intimate knowledge of the best of English literature both excelled, and these and other acquirements, coupled with their exceptional faculty of retentive memory, supplied them with rich stores of

illustrations and examples which contributed largely to the charm and clarity of their writings. Both, too, had a mass of readily quotable knowledge of the Bible, Shakespeare, and numerous other classics, to an extent not often attained even by purely literary specialists.

In making this short comparison I am reminded of the pleasure and profit which I owe to the works of both Maudsley and Mercier. The former impressed me early with a strong preference for the study of subjects based on scientific knowledge rather than on tradition, while Mercier's writings on insanity, some time after I had taken to medical work and was becoming interested in psychological medicine, gave me the kind of guidance that I had been looking for in vain. And still, after frequent re-readings, they seem to me to have achieved more completely than any others the immensely difficult task of making plain, to the serious beginner needing enlightenment, the many rough places that obstruct the approach to knowledge of this attractive but perplexing subject. But I am not intending here to compare these books with other and larger works which abound in detailed information, and are expressly written for those who specialise as alienist physicians.

Mercier spent his life in strenuous effort. In some respects his boyhood recalls that of Charles Dickens. After a few years at Merchant Taylors' School he sought his own living by reason of family circumstances, and engaged in various employments where he gained some varied knowledge and experiences which stood him in good stead later. During this time he went to sea as a cabin-boy, and afterwards served as a clerk in a London warehouse. Ultimately he was enabled to commence medical-student life at the London Hospital when about eighteen years old, and he qualified as M.R.C.S. four years later. From this time forwards he was self-supporting. I have lately heard from a distinguished surgeon, who was Surgical Registrar at the Hospital when Mercier was House-Surgeon, that he was looked upon as exceptionally bright and thoughtful, giving promise of intellectual achievements of no common order, and that when in after years he renewed his acquaintance with Mercier, he " marvelled greatly at his wide knowledge of all sorts of subjects outside his professional work: general literature, mechanics, agriculture, etc." He adds, "I loved him, admired him, and read everything written by him."

At the London Hospital Mercier came especially under the influence of Dr. Hughlings Jackson, and thus was led to study deeply the writings of Herbert Spencer which greatly inspired Jackson's thought and work. Mercier was one of but two men I have known who read through twice and carefully studied the whole of Spencer's volumes. Knowledge of this rare feat must have kindled even that calm philosopher's enthusiasm. It was no long time before Mercier's natural bent towards scientific thought and philosophy became fixed, and, as might have been

expected, he devoted himself especially to his favourite studies and took to alienism as his profession. After serving as a medical officer in some large public asylums, he was, on the recommendation of Sir James Crichton-Browne, appointed as resident physician to a private institution which was in need of thorough reconstruction. Under his auspices the institution was energetically reformed, removed from London to Catford, in Kent, and carried on by him successfully for many years until failing health obliged him to resign. For a few years he practised in London, and finally went to Parkstone in Dorsetshire, where he took private patients until a few years before his death.

During a period of over twenty years he suffered severely from the pains and the progressive crippledness of osteitis deformans. In his later years he was attacked by a deafness that at last was nearly total, and in course of time by choroiditis, which for many months before his death put a stop to reading and writing. He began, however, to write by dictation, and persevered until a sharp onset of gout in the foot followed promptly by diaphragmatic pleurisy was his almost sudden death-blow; for his chest had for long stopped its breath-work.

Until about the last eight years, spent at Parkstone, Mercier held many appointments, and did much public work of value. He was Lecturer on Insanity at Westminster Hospital School of Medicine for many years as well as at the London School of Medicine for Women; and later he held a similar post at Charing Cross Hospital, where he was also Physician for Mental Diseases. At the London University he was examiner on this subject. As a member of the Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Inebriety, appointed by the Home Secretary in 1908, he did good service, contributing in large measure to the Report; and his evidence given before the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded on behalf of the Royal College of Physicians was of considerable importance. His sound knowledge and rare power of expressing himself with precision of language gained him much credit when giving evidence in the Law Courts, and he was for many years a prominent and welcome speaker at the Medico-Legal Society. Mercier was also appointed by the College of Physicians to deliver the Fitzpatrick Lectures on the History of Medicine in 1913 and 1914, his subjects being "Astrology in Medicine" and "Leper Houses and Mediæval Hospitals."

It is needless for me to recite here any particulars of Dr. Mercier's long service and activity in connection with this Journal and the Association, but I would call to remembrance the address he gave in his year of Presidency, which was a very striking and thoughtful account of his own attitude at that time towards the questions underlying the problem of the relation between body and mind.

He was married a second time after an interval of several years,

and had the grievous fate to lose, only a few years before his death, the much-loved wife to whom he had been married but two years.

In reviewing here the special qualities of Dr. Mercier as an alienist, a scientific philosopher and a man of letters, I cannot attempt any detailed or even adequate criticism of his numerous and varied works. I have already indicated my judgment of him as an alienist physician and teacher, and do not propose to speak much further under this head in a journal among whose readers there are many more fitted than myself to deal comprehensively with this part of the subject. But as I am impressed with the belief that Mercier has been from time to time more or less misunderstood, and therefore misrepresented, in respect to one matter which seems to me of importance, I shall make a brief endeavour to lessen or dispel the misunderstanding to which I refer. I gather from what I have heard at some meetings of the Association and have read long ago in medical journals, that from the early time when Mercier began to insist on the primary importance of concentrating on disorder of conduct in the diagnosis and interpretation of insanity, he was frequently understood and quoted as meaning that disorder of conduct was the primary pathological event in point of time that ultimately led up to the diseased state known as insanity. In other words it seems to have been sometimes implied that Mercier looked upon disease of the mind as a result of disorder of conduct.

I am well aware that occasionally in the course of controversial correspondence Mercier did not re-state in full the definition of insanity which he had frequently reiterated in his writings and had persistently set forth, as disorder of conduct always connoting disorder of mind and brain and other organs. And when, on one of the occasions mentioned above, he replied to his critic, "When I say that insanity is primarily a disorder, not of mind, but of conduct, I intend to state my doctrine, not of conduct, but of insanity," it is perhaps not very surprising that his meaning, however clear it must have been to most readers, might be somewhat obscure to others who were imperfectly acquainted with Mercier's previous writings, or had not taken the trouble to find out the real point at issue.

However this may be, it is very plain even in his early writings that he was insisting on the fact that disorder of mind could and did exist without insanity; that disorder of conduct is of the first importance as a sign of insanity, and often the *sole* sign, its accompaniments being matters of inference only or mainly. Mercier, in a word, taught that a man is rightly judged as insane from evidence of what he says and does, not of what one may infer or guess that he thinks or feels.

As to how far Mercier's teaching on this matter was original or not mere opinions may differ. This question cannot be discussed here. It appears to me, however, that at first he was criticised, *not* for talking

platitudes, but for holding erroneous views ; but that in later years, and after his own reiterated statements that his views had not been accepted, it was argued that, on the contrary, his views were common property and required no assistance to recommend them. For myself I cannot avoid the conclusion, based on the grounds above stated, that Mercier was in this instance, as in all others, very far from thinking or even talking platitudes when he issued his first work on insanity, and I feel sure that genuine misconception on the part of some of his hearers and his readers must have given rise to the question of the importance and originality of his teaching in this respect. It is of course only this last-named question which really concerns this memorial notice ; and as, in common with many others, I hold the view that this part of Mercier's exposition of the scientific study of insanity is both original and light-giving in a very notable degree, I have deemed it right to give my own notion of this matter. Mercier was doubtless an eager disputant on many questions of varying importance, when no point of scientific moment was concerned, and sometimes plunged into controversy for the mere pleasure of it. On such occasions he often allowed his abundant wit and humour to have full play ; and though in most of his serious writings this tendency was duly restrained, it may have been sometimes apparent in a context which rendered it liable to misinterpretation. But the bulk of his important works bears the true marks of careful observation and sound reasoning, and demonstrates his single aim to search out the truth in all questions into which he inquired.

As a philosophical student of scientific matters, especially in the sphere of *Psychology*, Mercier's rank was confessedly high. Yet he is not readily classed as an adherent of any special school or *'ism*. During most of his life he was strongly influenced by the biological and psychological tenets of Herbert Spencer. Thus he continued to hold, long after the time when the work of Weismann and other biologists had shown grounds for rejecting it, the doctrine of the strictly biological transmission to offspring of characters specially developed in the lifetime of parents. And his psychological writings, especially in their theoretical aspect, were, like Maudsley's, more or less coloured by these views on questions of heredity and reproduction. But later in life he became increasingly inclined to recognise more fully the part played by training and experience, especially as regards the human mental qualities, in the development of characters, and to regard all alike as the joint product of a transmitted germinal tendency and of environmental action.

On the more speculative, but, with regard to the scientific study of psychology, the more relevant question of the relation between bodily and mental functioning, Dr. Mercier was, at least until his later years, a confessed "dualist" or "epiphenomenalist," and taught, with Spencer

and others, one doctrine of an "impassable gulf" between so-called "mind" and so-called "matter." (1)

Yet even on this much-debated question there were, I think, a few signs in Mercier's later writings and perhaps more in what he said in the course of discussion, of his inclination towards the views which he had formerly opposed. At any rate, Mercier was no blind follower of any authority. He was an independent thinker, far more ready to modify or abandon his opinions than some of his critics have supposed.

In noticing some of the most important of Mercier's many other books I must confine myself to mere indication of what I deem to be their merits, without attempting any critical review.

His earlier work on the *Nervous System and the Mind*, which preceded by several years his later and more widely known treatise on *Psychology, Normal and Morbid*, may still be regarded as a valuable exposition of the subject, in which no one of any school of thought is likely to find much cause for quarrel. It is especially adapted for readers beginning their studies.

Much the same may be said of the book on *Conduct and its Disorders, Biologically Considered*, in which the author estimates the various modes and phases of human activity in the light of their value in securing the survival of man in the struggle for existence. This book is complementary to several others of Mercier's works, and, though open to criticism from some biological points of view, must take a high place for its originality and practical value. It bears the mark of much study and close thinking.

The work entitled *A New Logic* consists of a detailed criticism of both traditional and modern logic as taught in professional lectures and treatises, as well as of an insistent setting forth of the distinction between the "material" argument on which action depends and by which discovery is made, and the forming logic of postulation, in which the proposition is formulated for the purpose of the argument. The book has met with more blame than favour from specialists in logic, to some extent apparently on the ground of the author's alleged misunderstanding of the Aristotelian logic. I cannot venture to enter even into the precincts of the modern logical arena, but will say only that at least the constructive part of this book, on the science and art of reasoning, seems to me of the highest worth to all intelligent students who desire to learn how to think correctly. Much of its contents may be read with advantage in connection with the author's book on *Causation*, presently to be mentioned, in which there will be found an acute criticism on J. S. Mills' *Canons of Induction*, and also Mills' whole treatment of "Causation."

Mercier's book on *Causation and Belief*, which of all his more especially philosophical works I rank the highest in respect of sound

thinking, clear expression and practical value, must be passed over here without any justification of my opinion of it. It appeared first in this Journal in January and April, 1916, and subsequently was published in book form by Messrs. Longmans & Co. Such a book was greatly needed. The thoroughly practical chapter on "Causes of Death and Causes of Insanity" affords one out of many striking illustrations of the high value of this book, and in itself may serve to contribute largely to the justification which space forbids me to attempt. The two books by Mercier dealing with the legal and medical sides of the subject of crime and criminals, entitled respectively *Criminal Responsibility in the Insane* and *Crime and Criminals*, were both awarded (with an interval of ten years) the Swimey Prize, which is given jointly by the Society of Arts and the Royal College of Physicians for the best book on medical jurisprudence. The first has been acclaimed widely by both legal and medical authorities, and the second, in my judgment and that of many others conversant with the subject, sets forth within comparatively small compass one of the most comprehensive, careful and best-reasoned expositions of the subject-matter with which I am acquainted. It is written with truly scientific method and much knowledge of the material dealt with. This work is destined to outlive for an indefinite time the immense majority of all others devoted to the consideration of the nature of crime and criminals.

A few more books, minor in point of size although not all of them in relative importance, are well worthy of note. In his later years Mercier took up strongly the subject of "modern spiritualism" and "telepathy," which he had hitherto deemed too insignificant for serious handling; but, on the appearance of Sir Oliver Lodge's reiterated announcement, in the book entitled *Raymond*, that the facts alleged in evidence of spiritualism had been proved *scientifically*, he proceeded to make a careful study of the material published over a space of many years by many writers on both sides of this question, including the *Reports of the Society for Psychical Research*. Thereafter he wrote a book called *Spiritualism and Sir Oliver Lodge*. This thorough and brilliant examination of Sir O. Lodge's method of inquiry and the complete confutation of the claim he made for scientific proof of his conclusions was followed not long afterwards by an inimitably close parody of the spiritualistic reasonings of Sir Oliver Lodge and others, with the title of *Spirit Experiences*, to which as a sub-title the publisher added, *Or the Conversion of a Sceptic*. This contained numerous references to the doings of "mediums," well known and widely advertised in spiritualistic writings, and was aptly complementary to Mercier's previous counterblast to the Professor's book. But the pamphlet seems to have grievously misled several "spiritualists" and believers in "telepathy," as well as other reviewers, the former welcoming the author as a deserter from "ortho-



dox" science to their own ranks, and some of the latter deploring the mental breakdown that could alone, as they deemed, account for this great lapse of a "distinguished scientist." This *jeu d'esprit* cannot fail to call to the minds of some of us an occasion when Mercier ventured to read a paper before the Medico-Psychological Association on the Interpretation of Dreams, when his subtle parabolic essay was at first misconstrued by some, but at last, as its meaning appeared, brought down upon the reader some measure of disapproval for its ill-placed levity.

To speak duly of Mercier as a man of letters is beyond my present scope. His style varied considerably with his subject-matter, but it was ever noticeable for its pure, unpretentious and incisive English. He wrote with great rapidity; but in his larger works, and indeed most others, he pruned and corrected much, frequently re-writing them in part and sometimes wholly. In his choice of the right word, for the sake of both accurate expression and literary form, he may be held to have rivalled such masters of writercraft as R. L. Stevenson and Flaubert. But under the easy and clear flow of his sentences the linguistic precisian that he really was lay very deeply hidden.

Before ending this attempt to estimate the qualities of Dr. Mercier I venture to give the following quotations, the one from an appreciation kindly sent me by a literary friend of his and mine, Mr. Herbert Allport, the other from a short notice of him written by Sir William Osler, and published in the *British Medical Journal* in September, 1919.

Mr. Allport, who is the Secretary of an old-established club known as "The Casual," which meets for frequent informal discussions on all kinds of subjects, and of which Mercier was for many years one of the brightest members, writes thus: "There was no man of letters whom Mercier loved better than Dr. Johnson, and there was no man whose sayings he quoted more frequently. He had much in common with his hero: the same fearlessness in controversy, the same sturdy common sense, the same trenchancy of expression, the same wide and varied knowledge, the same pugnacity, and sometimes, perhaps, the same disposition to talk for victory . . . Whenever I was in straits for a paper at the Casual Club I used to write to him for help. By return of post he answered—'You can put me down for any date you like.' He might almost have added, 'for any *subject* you like,' for there were few with which he was not able and willing to deal . . . Usually, when a man asks you for criticism it means that he is asking you for praise. Mercier not only accepted criticism with the readiest good humour, but was always willing to modify what he had written if he thought you had made out your point . . . He wrote many books on many subjects, and the subjects, within certain limits, modified the style. There were, however, three characteristics which were never absent. The first

and most important was the lucidity of thought and expression. The second was the purity of the English. The third, which I have not seen mentioned elsewhere, was the abundance and felicity of the examples and illustrations. A fourth characteristic—the humour and sarcasm which distinguished him—was less uniformly manifested; but whether they were rigidly held in check or displayed with freedom, humour and sarcasm were always at his command. Mercier was the most many-sided man whom I have known with intimacy, and probably everyone who came in close contact with him could contribute some fresh trait of intellect or character. His knowledge of general history and literature was astonishing in one whose attention had been chiefly given to other studies. He had a few minor foibles, but there was no one whom I admired so greatly, and I shall always be proud that he was willing to regard me as a friend.”

Sir William Osler writes thus of Mercier: “Though not of Oxford, and a sharp critic of her methods, the University had a great fascination for him, and of late years he not infrequently would spend a few days at the Randolph seeing old friends. It was a rare treat to have him dine in Hall, and afterwards, in Common Room, start a discussion on the need of reform in our methods of education. He had very clear and sound views, and argued with great ability upon the uselessness of logic as at present taught. He delighted to shock the classical don by unmeasured abuse of Aristotle, whose methods, he claimed, had done irreparable damage to the human mind. With a rich vocabulary and a keen wit he had no equal among us as a controversialist. He was best with a few friends after dinner, with enough port, as he would say, to quiet his gout. When last with me, a few months ago, he was in fine form—I never saw such a triumph of mind over matter—and entertained us with stories of his student life and anecdotes of Hughlings Jackson and Jonathan Hutchinson. Maître François must have been a man of this type, and Mercier’s trick of tongue was racial. Controversy he loved, and, strange to say, it brought him friends; despite the caustic pen, he had a warm, generous heart. The courage with which he bore his many infirmities is a lesson to us all. Never complaining, he worked on to the end, and went down, as he promised, with all the ‘flags flying.’ We shall miss the brilliant critic of our ways and words.”

I would add but little on my own account to the words of these discerning critics. However, on some occasions, Mercier’s readiness to engage in controversy and his great joy of battle may have brought him into sharp conflict of wit with some who misunderstood him, and others who disagreed with his views know that he was a man innocent of all rancour.<sup>(2)</sup> He never nursed a grudge, and always assumed that those with whom he disputed were as ready as he was himself to take

impersonally the passes and hits of argumentative encounters. In this assumption, however, he was occasionally mistaken, and perhaps he was sometimes himself to blame for being misunderstood. He may have had some enemies, but he numbered troops of friends. He was straightforward, fearless, warm-hearted and ever trustworthy. His abounding courage inspired him to fight down depression in many seasons of great trouble, and throughout that period of more than twenty years when his life might be truly called "a long disease."

Among several able and untiring workers I have personally known who bravely and cheerfully laboured on to the end there was but one other whose many struggles, pains and sorrows could be fittingly matched with his. He alone of them could have rightfully endorsed these verses by that other who was the maker of them :

" In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud,  
Under the bludgeoning of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

" It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishment the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate ;  
I am the captain of my soul."

H. BRYAN DONKIN.

(<sup>1</sup>) Here he differed widely from Maudsley, whose writings clearly show him to have been a scientific materialist, and a direct successor, equipped with modern physiological knowledge, to the French encyclopædist philosophers, such as d'Holbach and Cabanis; himself, it may be added, to be succeeded by Mr. Hugh Elliot, the author of the newly-published and weighty book on *Modern Science and Materialism*.—(<sup>2</sup>) As one instance out of several where strenuous scientific disputes in journals led to subsequent acquaintance and ultimate friendship I would record that one of the warmest of Mercier's opponents was appointed by him as his literary executor.

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### Part I.—Original Articles.

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*The Need for Schools of Psychiatry.* By C. HUBERT BOND, D.Sc., M.D.Edin., F.R.C.P.Lond., Commissioner of the Board of Control and Emeritus Lecturer in Psychiatry at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School.

IN their fourth Annual Report, published in 1918, the Board of Control drew attention—not for the first time, but in more extended form than hitherto—to deficiencies in the arrangements, as at present organised, for the treatment of persons suffering from mental disorder,