

That dysentery is particularly apt to occur in lunatics, owing to the deterioration of nerve-cells affecting the trophic nerve-supply to the colon.

That it is far less apt to occur in congenital cases of insanity or those in whom the mental disease is stationary.

That the statistical evidence is entirely against the view that dysentery is spread by the transfer of recovered cases from ward to ward.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Stansfield, Medical Superintendent of Bexley Asylum, for his kindness in affording me every facility in my investigation of the disease at this Asylum.

(<sup>1</sup>) Manson, *Tropical Diseases*.—(<sup>2</sup>) Clifford Allbutt, *System of Medicine*.—(<sup>3</sup>) *Fifty-Sixth Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy*.—(<sup>4</sup>) R. J. Legge, *Journal of Mental Science*, July, 1899.—(<sup>5</sup>) Dr. Barwise, Report on Colitis.—(<sup>6</sup>) *Archives of Neurology*, vol. i.—(<sup>7</sup>) Gemmel, *Idiopathic Ulcerative Colitis*.—(<sup>8</sup>) J. W. H. Eyre, *Brit. Med. Journ.*, April, 1904.—(<sup>9</sup>) *Brit. Med. Journ.*, April, 1905.—(<sup>10</sup>) Stevenson and Murphy, *Hygiene and Public Health*.—(<sup>11</sup>) McClean, *Diseases of Tropical Climates*.—(<sup>12</sup>) Clouston, *Med. Times and Gazette*, June, 1865.—(<sup>13</sup>) *Fifty-Seventh Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy*.—(<sup>14</sup>) McFarland, *Text-Book of Pathogenic Bacteria*.—(<sup>15</sup>) Cowan, *Brit. Med. Journ.*, March, 1895.—(<sup>16</sup>) Claye Shaw, *Brit. Med. Journ.*, October, 1901.—(<sup>17</sup>) Drs. Mott and Durham, Report on Colitis or Asylum Dysentery, 1900.—(<sup>18</sup>) *Archives of Neurology*, vol. ii, 1903.—(<sup>19</sup>) C. Ogle, *Path. Soc. Trans.*, 1897.—(<sup>20</sup>) J. H. Targett, *Path. Soc. Trans.*, 1892.—(<sup>21</sup>) Hale White, *Guy's Hospital Reports*, 1888.

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## Recent Medico-Legal Cases.

REPORTED BY DR. MERCIER.

[The Editors request that members will oblige by sending full newspaper reports of all cases of interest as published by the local press at the time of the assizes.]

*Re Thos. Gill, deceased.*

For the account of this case we are indebted to the kindness of Dr. Percy Smith, who was engaged in it as an expert witness.

The deceased made, in January, 1904, a will leaving, as he had agreed with his late wife he would, one half of his property to his adopted daughter and his late wife's niece, Mrs. Ducksbury.

After his wife's death (? at the end of 1903) he drank heavily. In July, 1904, he stayed with Mrs. Ducksbury, and during that

time drank a great deal and ate very little. About July 19th the Ducksburys became alarmed at his condition, and called in medical advice. On July 23rd he began to have delusions. He declared that the Ducksburys were trying to poison him, and that he was not the Thomas Gill who was wanted by the police. He declared that people were after him from Skipton (his home), and that he saw a man up a tree.

On July 26th he left the Ducksburys' house early in the morning and went off to Skipton alone. He refused to take food, and said to Mrs. Ducksbury, "Teresa, you know you are trying to poison me. I will not take anything." He also thought Dr. Stevens was trying to poison him.

During his stay with the Ducksburys, and before he had the delusions, he talked to Mr. Ducksbury about his affairs, spoke of appointing his executor, and had a will drafted to that effect. The day after leaving the Ducksburys he made a new will, leaving all his property to his brothers and sisters, and to Mrs. Ducksbury nothing. This will was made by a solicitor whom he had never employed before. Deceased called on the solicitor at half past five in the afternoon, and pulled out of his pocket an unsigned will, in which he had made pencil alterations depriving Mr. Ducksbury of his executorship and Mrs. Ducksbury of her legacy. He said the Ducksburys had offended him while he had stayed with them, that he wished to have his will altered, and that he did not want to go to bed again until it was done. He was in a hurry, and the will was there and then engrossed and signed. Meantime he audited some accounts and did them correctly. On August 4th he called at the solicitor's office, burnt his will of January, 1904, went through the new will, and said it was as he wished. He died August 12th, 1904.

It was proved that on the evening of July 25th he said to Mrs. Ducksbury, "Oh, Teresa, you are a wicked young woman. What would your aunt have thought if she had known this, that it is your intention to poison me to-night? You can't deny it, because I have heard everything that has been said between you and John. What have I ever done to you? You have sent your husband out for poison—he has gone for it now." He walked about all night, refused breakfast, and left in the morning, saying, "I dare not stay in the house any longer because you are going to poison me. I have heard all."

In the result the new will was quashed, and the copy of the

will of January, 1904, was proved, although the deceased had destroyed the original.

It is notoriously difficult to upset a will, even when the testator was indisputably insane at the time it was made; but in this case the evidence was very clear, not only that the testator suffered from delusions at the time of making the will of July 27th, but that the delusions were of a character that was likely to, and did in fact, influence him to make such a disposition of his property as he would not have made but for the delusions. These are in practice the only circumstances under which a will can be upset, and it is satisfactory to find that, when they are proved to exist, a will is upset in spite of the great reluctance of the Courts to interfere with testamentary dispositions.

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*Rex v. Hother.*

Helen Hother, 69, was indicted for the manslaughter of a lunatic named Fanny Osborne at Hove on November 30th last.

The case for the prosecution was, shortly, that Osborne, who had been a certified lunatic since 1885, had been first placed under the charge of Dr. George Hother, the prisoner's husband, and after his death in 1889 the lunatic was placed in the prisoner's charge, she being paid £60 per annum. Mr. Jowers, physician and surgeon, had from time to time seen Osborne every six months until July, 1903, when he ceased to act. In February Mr. Rigby, another physician, also saw her, but he was not called in again until after the death. On November 30th the prisoner informed a neighbour that her "patient" was dead, and requested her to assist in laying out the body and tidying up the place. The body was then in a front room in a deplorable condition of filth and dirt, and there was a serious bruise corresponding to an internal injury of two broken ribs. The prisoner requested her to move the body into a back room and to say, if questioned, that Osborne had died there. The bedding was soaked through to the floor, and was in a filthy state. The ceiling was also in a state of dilapidation, and the only covering on the body was a nightdress and counterpane. Such was the state of everything in the room, that the neighbours (another woman had also been called in) were overcome