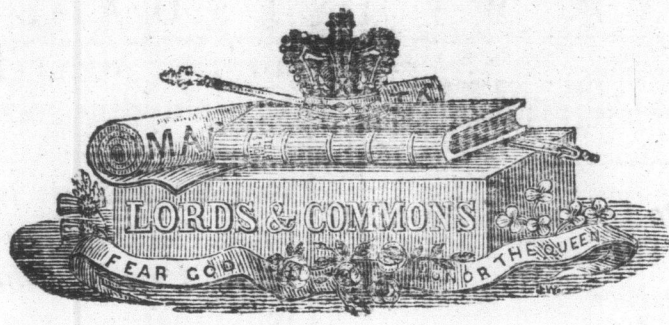


The



Star

AND

Conception Bay Journal.

HEARTS RESOLVED AND HANDS PREPARED, THE BLESSINGS THEY ENJOY TO GUARD.—SMOLLET.

VOL. V.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 1840.

No. 296

HARBOUR GRACE, Conception Bay, Newfoundland:—Printed and Published by JOHN THOMAS BURTON, at his Office, opposite the MARKET PLACE

DISEASE OF DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS.

Physicians are now well acquainted, we believe, with the mental disorder which passes by the name of *double consciousness*, or more properly *divided consciousness*, wherein, to use the language of Dr. Henry Dewar, are exhibited "two separate and independent trains of thought, and two independent mental capabilities in the same individual; each train of thought, and each capability, being wholly dis-severed from the other, and the two states in which they respectively predominate subject to frequent interchanges and alternations." This learned gentleman some years ago read to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, a paper respecting a case of this malady which occurred at Aberdeen in 1815. The patient was a girl of sixteen, labouring under a distressing disorder incident to her sex at that period of life, and the first symptom was a propensity to fall asleep in the evenings. "This was followed," says Dr. Dewar, "by the habit of talking in her sleep on these occasions. One evening she fell asleep in this manner, imagined herself an Episcopal clergyman, went through the ceremony of baptising three children, and gave an appropriate *extempore* prayer. Her mistress shook her by the shoulders, on which she awoke, and appeared unconscious of every thing, except that she had fallen asleep, of which she showed herself ashamed. She sometimes dressed herself and the children while in this state, or, as Mrs. L. called, 'dead asleep;' answered questions put to her, in such a manner as to show that she understood the questions but the answers were often, though not always, incongruous." One day, in this state, she "set the breakfast with perfect correctness, with her eyes shut. She afterwards awoke with the child on her knee, and wonder how she got on her clothes."—Sometimes "the cold air wakened her, at other times she was seized with the affection while walking out with the children. "She sang a hymn delightfully in this state, and from a comparison which Dr. Dyce had an opportunity of making, it appeared incomparably better done than she could accomplish when well.

In the meantime, a still more singular and interesting symptom began to make its appearance.—The circumstances which occurred during the paroxysm were completely forgotten by her when the paroxysm was over, but were perfectly remembered during subsequent paroxysms. Her mistress said, that when in this stupor on subsequent occasions, she told her what was said to her on the even-

ing on which she baptised the children." Other instances of this kind are given. A depraved fellow-servant, understanding that she wholly forgot every transaction that occurred during the fit, clandestinely introduced a young man into the house, who treated her with rudeness. Next day she had not the slightest recollection even of that transaction, nor did any person interested in her welfare know of it for several days, till she was in one of her paroxysms, when she related the whole facts to her mother. Next Sunday she was taken to the church by her mistress, while the paroxysm was on her. She shed tears during the sermon. She shed tears during the account given of the execution of three young men at Edinburgh, who had described in their dying declaration the dangerous steps with which their career of vice and infamy took its commencement. When she returned home, she recovered in a quarter of an hour, was quite amazed at the questions put to her about the church sermon, and denied that she had been in any such place; but next night, on being taken ill, she mentioned that she had been at church, repeated the words of the text, and, in Dr. Dyce's hearing, gave an accurate account of the tragical narrative of the three young men, by which her feelings had been so powerfully affected. On this occasion, though in Mrs. L's house she asserted that she was in her mother's."

Drs. Dyce and Dewar do not give any theory to account for these very extraordinary phenomena.—They mention that the girl complained of confusion and oppression in her head at the coming on of the fits; and that, after the termination of the disorder which had afflicted her, she was no more troubled with divided consciousness.

A still more remarkable case was reported, in 1816, by Dr. Mitchell, in the Medical Repository, an American publication.—"When I was employed," says he, "early in December 1815, with several other gentlemen, in doing the duty of a visitor to the United States Military Academy at West Point, a very extraordinary case of double consciousness in a woman was related to me by one of the professors. Major Ellicott, who so worthily occupies the mathematical chair in that seminary, vouches for the correctness of the following narrative, the subject of which is related to him by blood, and an inhabitant of one of the western counties of Pennsylvania: Miss R possessed, naturally, a very good constitution, and arrived at adult age without having it impaired by disease. She possessed

an excellent capacity, and enjoyed fair opportunities to acquire knowledge. Besides the domestic arts and social attainments, she had improved her mind by reading and conversation, and was well versed in penmanship. Her memory was capacious, and stored with a copious stock of ideas. Unexpectedly, and without any forewarning, she fell into a profound sleep, which continued several hours beyond the ordinary term. On waking, she was discovered to have lost every trait of acquired knowledge. Her memory was a blank, all vestiges, both of works and things, were obliterated and gone. It was found necessary for her to learn every thing again. She even acquired, by new efforts, the art of spelling, reading, writing, and calculating, and gradually became acquainted with the persons and objects around, like a being for the first time brought into the world. In these exercises she made considerable proficiency. But, after a few months, another fit of somnolency invaded her. On rousing from it, she found herself restored to the state she was in before the first paroxysm, but was wholly ignorant of every event and occurrence that had befallen her afterwards. The former condition of her existence, she now calls the *Old State*, and the latter the *New State*; and she is as unconscious of her double character as two distinct persons are of their respective natures. For example, in her old state, she possesses all her original knowledge; in her new state only what she acquired since. If a gentleman or lady be introduced to her in the old state, to know them satisfactorily she must learn them in both states. In the old state, she possesses fine powers of penmanship, while in the new, she writes a poor awkward hand, having not had time or means to become expert. During four years and upwards, she has undergone periodical transitions from one of these states to the other. The alterations are always consequent upon a long and sound sleep. Both the lady and her family are now capable of conducting the affair without embarrassment. By simply knowing whether she is in the old or new state, they regulate the intercourse, and govern themselves accordingly."

These curious facts are adduced in Mr. Combe's System of Phrenology, with the remark, that the only conclusion which seems to arise from them, is, that, before memory can exist, the organs of the mind require to be affected in the same manner, or to be in a state analogous to that in which they were when the impression was first received. "This inference," adds Mr. Combe, "is supported by

several other facts. Dr. Abel informed me of an Irish porter to a warehouse, who forgot, when sober, what he had done when drunk; but being drunk, again recollected the transaction of his former state of intoxication. On one occasion, being drunk, he had lost a parcel of some value, and in his sober moments could give no account of it. Next time he was intoxicated, he recollected that he had left the parcel at a certain house, and there being no address on it, it had remained there safely, and was got on his calling for it. The same phenomena present themselves in the state of somnambulism, produced by animal magnetism. In the works on this subject, it is mentioned, and the fact has been confirmed to me by a very intelligent friend, who has observed it in Paris, that a person who is magnetised so as to produce the kind of magnetic sleep termed somnambulism, acquires, like the girl in Aberdeen, a new consciousness and memory; he does not recollect the transactions of his ordinary state of existence but, acquires the power of speaking and of thinking in his induced state of abstraction from the external world. When this state has subsided, all that passed in it is obliterated from the memory, while the recollection of ordinary events is restored.—If the magnetic state is again recalled, memory, of the circumstances which formerly happened in that state is restored, and thus the individuals may be said to live in a state of divided consciousness. I am wholly unacquainted with the merits of animal magnetism; but the circumstance now stated, of alternating memory and forgetfulness, is mentioned in the books on the subject which I have consulted, and has been certified to me as true, by a gentleman whose understanding is too acute to allow me to believe that he was deceived, and whose honour is too high to admit of his deceiving others. These facts cannot be accounted for in a satisfactory way; but by communicating a knowledge of their existence, attention will be drawn to them, and future observations and reflection may ultimately throw light upon the subject."

PARENTAL INDULGENCE.—It is notorious indulged children become hard-hearted, ungrateful, and cruel to their parents in advanced life. There is no true and abiding love toward a parent, where there is not genuine respect for authority. They first contemn his authority, then despise him, then hate him, then resent, disregard, and abuse him. They claim it as a right to have their wishes gratified; they revenge refusal. Why should they not? They are but carrying out the principles in which he has educated them. The parent has taught them so. He has not trained them up in the way they should go, but in the way they would go. He has suffered human wisdom to reverse the mandate of divine.—He has accommodated his government to their selfish wills, instead of subduing those wills to rightful authority. The consequence is, a continued and growing misunderstanding and variance between them and the authorities over them, first between them and their parents, then between them and their teachers, then between them and their Bible, then between them and their God; and this breach gradually widens to an impassable gulph.