

*Remarks on the Townley case.* By DR. SYMONDS.

"In a recent case (Townley's) the prisoner was held responsible because he knew the consequences of his act, and he was actuated by evil passion, and he premeditated the crime. But a question might be raised whether he knew that he was doing wrong, seeing that he held the notion that an engagement made the lady his property, and that he might dispose of her as he liked. Though I should have joined in the verdict of 'guilty' on the whole evidence, I confess that there is a difficulty in distinguishing what one might call a strange, eccentric individual belief or crotchet from what another would call an insane belief in this case. But, seeing that the object of punishment is prevention, it would be dangerous to admit that a young lady's life might be left to the mercy of a lover's crotchets.

"In Townley's case, his particular notion did affect his view of the quality of his act in a pre-eminent degree, but it was combined with violent personal feeling. And the delusion, if so to be called rather than an eccentric notion, was not enough to prove a diseased state of mind. [Since the above was written it has been made highly probable by the investigation of this case by the Special Commission, that the alleged notion was an after-thought set up in vindication of the crime. See a very able medico-legal commentary on Townley's case, entitled 'Insanity and Crime,' by the editors of the 'Journal of Mental Science.'"]—*Remarks on Clinical Responsibility in relation to Insanity.*

*Dr. Forbes Winslow's evidence in the Townley case.*

"In fairness to Dr. Winslow and his views, a point should not be passed over, which alone bears any resemblance to what is properly termed a delusion on the part of the prisoner. He said, on the occasion of the second visit, that ever since some period previous to the day of the murder, six conspirators had been plotting against him with a view to destroy him, and that if he were set at liberty, he would have to leave the country to escape their plots. 'He became much excited, and assumed a wild, maniacal aspect,' of the genuineness of which Dr. Winslow was perfectly satisfied. Now, either the acuteness of the physician was misled and the whole statement was a sham on the part of the prisoner, who might have after all had a shrewd suspicion in his mind of the nature and object of the stranger's visit, or the statement was made, as Dr. Winslow thought, in good faith. In the latter case it would be interesting to know whether the physician thoroughly tested the nature and strength of this so-called delusion—whether he endeavoured to ascertain from the prisoner who these conspirators were, what formed their grounds of enmity to him, and why he supposed that enmity to have begun so soon and to be likely to continue so long. It is far from impossible that Townley may have referred to friends of Miss Goodwin, whom he may have had good reason to suspect of always opposing and thwarting his wishes. But in any case, when it is a delusion that has unhinged the mind of a man, and which forms the mainspring of his insanity, there can be no difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory conclusion as to its existence and strength. For any one may set up a delusion at a moment's notice—fancy himself the Emperor of China or the Wandering Jew—but it is easy for the veriest tyro in diagnosis to discover in a few minutes whether it be real or assumed. When the spring of it is once touched, the whole diseased mind works on this and nothing else; whereas if it be a sham, the ablest actor is unable to counterfeit the action of a real monomaniac. But it does not seem to have suggested itself to Dr. Winslow or to Townley's counsel