

## EXAMINATION IN PSYCHOLOGICAL MEDICINE.

The next examination in Ireland for the Certificate of Efficiency in Psychological Medicine will be held at the Richmond Asylum, Dublin, Thursday, February 16, 1888.

## Correspondence.

## MEDICAL AND CHEMICAL ASSESSORS.

To the Editors of "THE JOURNAL OF MENTAL SCIENCE."

SIRS,—I respectfully submit the annexed measure to the consideration of your readers. I shall not trespass upon your valuable space by sketching, or commenting upon, the history of the decline and fall of medical expertism in England. The fact remains. The instant reverence with which medieval tribunals bowed to its verdict; the tolerance shown, for example, by our own House of Lords to the usurpation of their judicial functions by the seven noble kinswomen to the Countess of Essex, who were all "sticklers for the nullity," has ceased, and very few and very feeble have been the voices raised to condemn the dictum of Bonnies—*l'expertise n'est qu'un verre qui grossit les objets*. The discreditable feud between legal and medical expertism is not to be terminated by concealing it under a thin veneer of superficial courtesy or a false analogy to the duties of counsel. It is the logical issue of the historical accident which, as civil procedure in England gradually became inquisitorial, substituted the medical advocate for the scientific assessor.

In drafting this measure, which is borrowed partly from the resolutions of an American medico-legal society, and partly from the Admiralty Jurisdiction Acts, I have had the benefit of the invaluable advice of Dr. Maudsley, and of my friend Dr. Henry D. Littlejohn, of Edinburgh.

I am, &c.,

A. WOOD RENTON.

3, Middle Temple Lane,  
17th October, 1887.

## MEDICAL AND CHEMICAL ASSESSORS ACT, 1888.

Be it enacted, etc., as follows :

1. This Act may be cited as the Medical and Chemical Assessors Act, 1888.
2. In the interpretation, and for the purposes of this Act, the following terms shall have the respective meanings hereinafter assigned to them, that is to say :
  - "Medico-legal" issue shall mean any issue arising upon the trial of any civil cause or criminal prosecution for the determination of which the opinion of medical or chemical experts may be deemed necessary.
  - "Judge" shall mean any person or persons invested by law with judicial authority, before whom, in the lawful exercise of such authority, any medico-legal issue may arise.
  - "Registrar" shall include any person who acts in the capacity of a registrar to any judge, as hereinbefore defined.
3. The provisions of this Act shall apply to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.
4. Upon the commencement of this Act duly qualified persons shall forthwith be appointed as follows to act in the manner hereinafter provided as medical and chemical assessors in England, Scotland, and Ireland respectively : The Lord Chancellor of England shall appoint twenty-four medical and twenty-four chemical assessors; the Lord President of Scotland

and the Lord Chancellor of Ireland shall each appoint twelve medical and twelve chemical assessors, to act within their respective jurisdictions.

5. Every assessor shall receive notice in writing of his appointment, and every such appointment shall be for the period of three years from and after the date of such notice.

6. (i.) At any time before or during the trial of any civil cause or criminal prosecution, any judge may require the registrar to summon to his assistance not less than three medical or chemical assessors.

(ii.) Every assessor so summoned shall be bound to attend at the trial and assist the judge in the manner hereinafter provided, and for every wilful disobedience to such summons shall be liable at the discretion of the judge to a penalty not exceeding five pounds, and shall receive for his services a fee, fixed by the judge after the trial, of not less than five guineas a day or for any part of a day, together with such an allowance for travelling and incidental expenses as the judge may direct.

(iii.) The said fee and allowance shall be payable out of the county rates.

7. It shall be the duty of every assessor summoned to and attending any trial as aforesaid to assist the judge by answering any questions, and by expressing in open court his opinion with reference to any medico-legal issue that may arise or may have arisen therein. But the judge, or in cases tried with a jury, the jury, shall not be bound to follow the opinion of any, or of a majority, of the assessors, unless he or they concurs or concur in it.

8. Nothing in this Act contained shall affect, or in any way prejudice, the right of any party to any civil cause or criminal prosecution to support his case, as hitherto, by the evidence of medical or chemical experts.

9. This Act shall commence and take effect from and after the first day of January, 1839.

10. Section fifty-six of the Judicature Act, 1873, from and including the words "other than" down to and including the word "crown" is hereby repealed.

---

### Obituary.

#### DR. J. N. RAMAER.

Psychological Medicine in Holland received a severe blow on the 2nd of November, 1887, by the decease of Dr. J. M. Ramaer.

He was born on the 20th of April, 1817, at Bois le Duc, and attended the grammar school at that place. His schoolfellows say that he was one of the best scholars, and that he displayed a great aptness in mastering difficulties. He afterwards studied medicine at Utrecht, where he was a pupil of Professor Schroeder van der Kolk. His medical degree was taken at Groningen, to which place his parents moved after a few years. The degree of M.D. was conferred upon him after his writing and defending a dissertation: "*De Æthiopica generis humani varietate.*"

After leaving the University of Groningen he set out on a tour to the schools of Vienna, Munich, and Paris, previously to his settling as a physician at Rotterdam in 1840.

The lessons of Professor van der Kolk caused him to make nervous and mental diseases his favourite study, and it was at the recommendation of this great anatomist and neurologist that Ramaer was appointed medical superintendent to the lunatic asylum at Zutphen. He was appointed in 1841 and entered upon his duties on 18th January, 1842.

It was in 1841 that the first law was passed in the Netherlands which greatly improved the lot of the insane, and it shows the great trust which Van der Kolk, the *auctor intellectualis* of the law, put in Ramaer, then only 24 years old. His subsequent career showed that the trust was well deserved. He devoted his energy and powers to the Zutphen Asylum till 1863, when he was appointed medical superintendent of the asylum at Delft. He stayed at Delft six years, and on the 1st of July, 1869, he moved to the Hague, where he settled as