

THE MEDICO-LEGAL ASPECT OF THE CASE OF MARTIAL BOURDIN.

THE accompanying photographs of Martial Bourdin, who was killed by the explosion of the bomb in Greenwich Park on Feb. 15th, strikingly reproduce and illustrate the description which we were able to publish of the necropsy on

Feb. 24th, and will be of great interest to our readers from a medico-legal point of view.

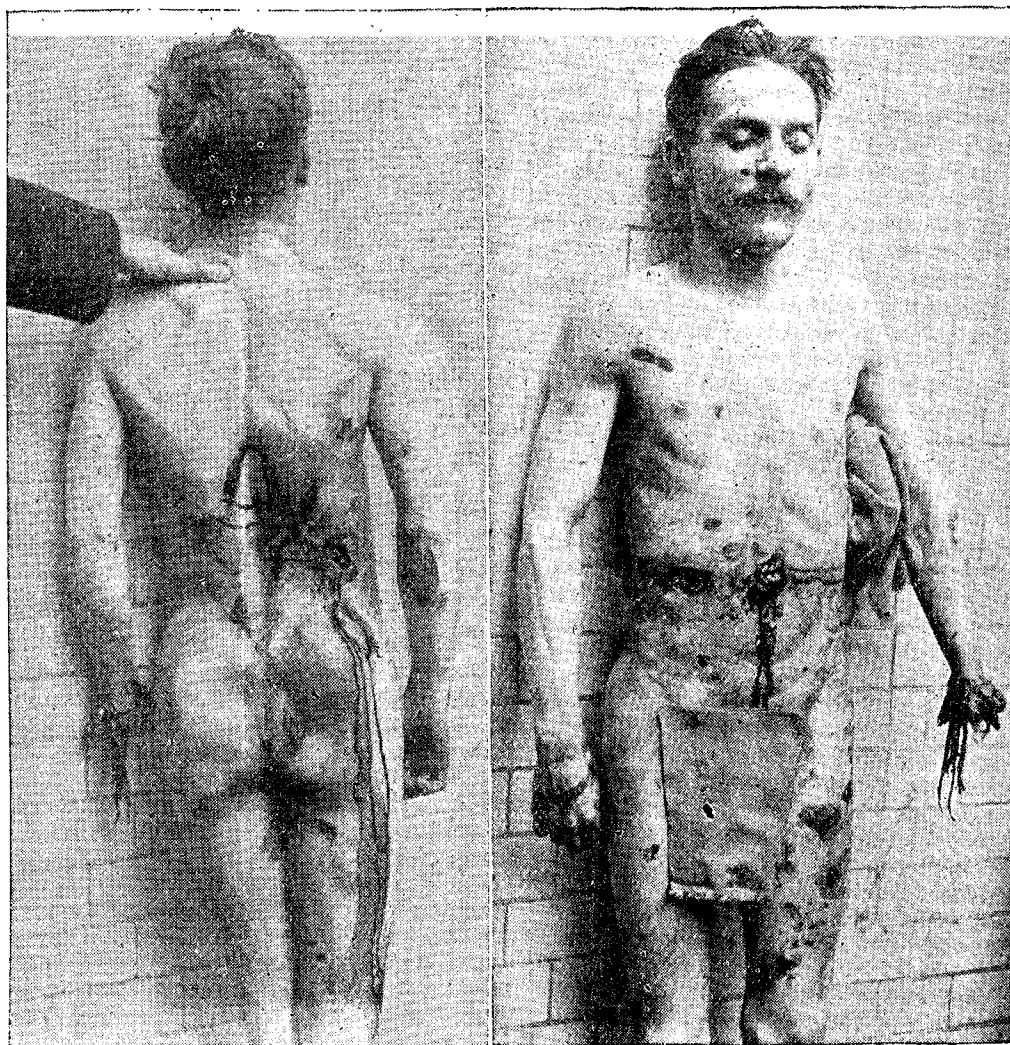
The following is a *résumé* of our account of the external appearances as described by us in that issue: "He was a short man, about 5 ft. 1 in. or 5 ft. 2 in. in height, delicate in features and general appearance, with a small hand and small limbs, a thin, fair moustache, and light hair, from two to three inches long, parted in the middle and brushed straight back. His left hand and wrist were

FIG. 1.



The illustration shows the main circular wound close to the umbilicus. The other marks indicate superficial charring.

FIG. 2.



Back and front view, showing at the back the deep wound below the right last rib; and on anterior view the deep wounds on the front of the left thigh. The other marks indicate superficial eschars and the main abdominal wound.

entirely blown away, and the tendons of the wrist and fingers were exposed for varying lengths, the longer tendons being on the extensor aspect. No damage was done to the right hand, but sundry black points—none larger than a pin's head—could be seen, especially on its radial aspect. A nearly circular opening into the abdomen was seen immediately to the right and slightly above the umbilicus. It was about one inch and a half in diameter, with a black, charred circumferential margin. A posterior opening was visible just below the right last rib, through the quadratus lumborum muscle, almost linear in character, except towards the spine, where it was a little more oval. It was through this wound that the pieces of the metal bomb found before an internal examination had been made had passed. On the left thigh and leg were seen numerous charred wounds, varying from one-third of an inch to an inch in length, and some of these were found to be quite superficial and others to extend more deeply. Just below the right hip-joint, in front, a deep wound passed down almost to the femur and in close proximity to the femoral vessels; another on the outer side, about an inch below the great trochanter, also ran deeply, and in this a large piece of metal was found. One or more smaller pieces of metal were found in the other wounds; but generally small pieces of clothing were the only foreign bodies obtained from them. On the left side there were superficial burns in the front of Scarpa's triangle, on the trunk and on the outer side of the shoulder. The bomb was probably held in the left hand, which had been placed a little above and to the right of the umbilicus, and, whilst the injuries to the left thigh were produced by a downward direction of the explosive current, the main force passed upwards and slightly obliquely to the right, missing the spinal column and the anterior spinal muscles and the large vessels. It is remarkable how little damage was produced by the bomb, and this can only be explained by its being so near to the body when it exploded, and so affording very little space for the scattering of its contents."

The photographs were taken by Mr. T. Sturdee of St. John's, S.E.

THE CHELSEA HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN.

It will be remembered that at a meeting of the Chelsea Vestry on Feb. 6th Dr. Louis Parkes, the medical officer of health and public analyst for Chelsea, presented a report on the sanitary condition of the Chelsea Hospital for Women which reflected gravely upon those responsible for the general and medical management of that institution. This report, which was of so serious a nature that the vestry unanimously resolved to forward a copy of it to the Local Government Board and the Home Office, requesting that an official inquiry should be made into the matter, was printed in THE LANCET, for which reason we are happy to give the same publicity to the letter which follows:—

Letter to the Editors of THE LANCET from the Treasurer of the Chelsea Hospital for Women.

SIRS,—Following the letter of Dr. Eden, the secretary of the medical staff of this hospital, of the 21st ult., I am instructed by the Board of Management to write you as promised. It is from no want of respect to your journal that a full reply to your article of the 10th ult. has not been forthcoming till now. You are aware, as stated in that article, that the Vestry of Chelsea had asked of the Home Secretary and the Local Government Board an inquiry into the management of the hospital during the past year. Both these authorities have refused to institute such an inquiry. The Board of Management and the medical staff would have welcomed the most searching investigation by either the one or the other. However, the vestry's demands having been refused by the Home Office and the Local Government Board, we are free to address you. Herewith are presented to you full and accurate details of the four classes of operations as to which the medical officer of health for Chelsea makes special reference, and they are tabulated in such a way as to answer the five questions he asks as to each class. Moreover, the name of the operator is appended to every case. We make our reply in this form as you have endorsed his queries, although we do not for one moment admit the rights of any medical officer of health, however distinguished in his own

speciality, to set himself up as a judge of the operative work of this or any other hospital in his district. We venture to submit that to do so would be to set up a most dangerous precedent. We believe this is the first instance where any medical officer of health has, in a statement made professedly as to the insanitary condition of a hospital, taken occasion to make an attack upon the entire medical staff reflecting upon their professional probity and skill. It is needless to say that had these reflections been directed against any single member of the staff Dr. Parkes would have been proceeded against for libel and defamation of professional character, from which even his professional position would not protect him.

During the year under review 28 patients remained in the hospital from the previous year, and 636 new cases were admitted, making 664 under treatment. Of this number 373 required operation. Thirty-five women died, a general percentage mortality of 5.2 per cent. Of the 35 deaths, or 36 as has been alleged, including a prematurely born child, 13 never were operated upon at all. The death-rate amongst those not operated upon was therefore 4.9 per cent. This proves to demonstration that during 1893 the class of cases brought to us for treatment was one of patients in the last stages of illness. Our books show that the ordinary formalities of obtaining letters had again and again to be dispensed with, and that desperate cases were admitted simply in the common cause of humanity. Doubtless in this way some unsuitable cases were received, but it must be remembered that an accurate diagnosis cannot be made of obscure internal disease till after admission. Once admitted, we felt the responsibility of doing our best must be borne, and that it would be inhuman to turn the poor creatures out again merely to keep our statistics in a condition favourable to the medical staff. In this way at least fourteen cases more or less septically infected before admission came into our wards and unquestionably exerted a malign influence on some of our other cases. It is manifestly unfair to take one year's work and upon that to credit us with a death-rate of so many per cent. for this or for that operation. It is no more right for the medical staff to be specially blamed because the percentage of deaths of ovariectomy cases has been higher in 1893 than in any previous year than it is for them to claim undue praise because in six cases of extra-uterine gestation operated on in the same year there were absolutely no deaths.

The whole question thus raised as a side issue to the insanitary condition of the hospital bristles with fallacies. As to the sanitary report as laid before the vestry of Chelsea by Dr. Parkes, it involves that gentleman in a serious charge of misrepresentation and neglect. We do not stop to dwell upon the fact that he has recommended that the main drain of the hospital be carried inside the building, whereas it has been hitherto outside, nor that on many other points he is in conflict with other distinguished sanitary authorities; nor do we stop to plead that everything and every appliance that was regarded as sanitarily perfect was used regardless of expense when the hospital was built fourteen years ago. The gravamen of his charge is that he made his way into the hospital, that he discovered the insanitary condition of the hospital, and that he felt compelled to apply to the vestry to close the hospital on Feb. 6th, 1894; whereas the first case of scarlet fever occurred on Dec. 27th, 1893. The hospital was closed on the initiative of the treasurer on Dec. 29th, 1893—five weeks before he presented his report, be it noted. No patients were ever infected; three nurses were laid up with fever, not four, as he states; so promptly were they isolated and removed that in three days the outbreak was over. After closing, steps were taken to clear the hospital as speedily as could be done with due regard to the safety of convalescent patients; on Jan. 15th the hospital was empty. In the meantime it had been resolved to place the institution in the hands of the medical officer of health for disinfection and general inspection. On Jan. 17th, 19th, and 20th the medical officer of health inspected the hospital, and on the 22nd, by invitation, attended a meeting of the house committee, making a verbal report and generally advising. On the 24th his written report was received as to suggested sanitary improvements. Plans and specifications were forthwith got out and tenders invited. On Feb. 3rd, 1894, the treasurer of the hospital wrote Dr. Parkes to the effect that his recommendations would be carried out. On Feb. 2nd, 3rd, and 5th the sanitary engineer of the hospital waited upon Dr. Parkes with the plans embodying his suggestions and was refused an