JOHN DALRYMPE, F.R.S.

(1803-1852)
THE death of Dalrymple in the prime of life, after a lingering illness, must have been a great blow to the scientific side of ophthalmology of his day. Handicapped by sickness, he, in his short life, produced some work for which he should be remembered by ophthalmologists for all time; namely, the fine "Atlas of Diseases of the Eye," and his lesser known "Anatomy of the Eye." Such beautiful work performed during a strenuous life coupled with ill-health sets one wondering as to what he might have accomplished had he been spared to live to a green old age, and had he enjoyed good health.

In attempting a biography of Dalrymple, one is handicapped by the fact that it is more than 70 years since he died, and the obituary notices published at the time are nothing like so full as those of the present day. The same notice appeared in the Lancet and the Medical Times of 1852, both over the initials W.W.C. (certainly W. White Cooper). The notice is a true *nil nisi bonum* affair, but nothing emerges from it save the concrete facts that he lived in Grosvenor Street from 1839 to 1852, and that his death was due to renal disease. The obituary in the Medical Directory for 1853
is much ampler. From it we learn that he was the eldest son of William Dalrymple, surgeon of Norwich, and that he was educated by his father and at Edinburgh University. It is fairly certain that he would have been apprenticed to his father at an early age. He did not take, so far as I can discover, any medical degree at Edinburgh; his name does not figure on the lists of Edinburgh medical graduates, and there was no reason why he should have taken a medical degree; such was quite unnecessary for one who intended to practise as an eye surgeon in the early years of last century. It is of interest to note the fact that a James Dalrymple, Scoto-Britannicus, took his M.D.Edin. in 1731, with a thesis entitled "de tympania," and it may be permitted to wonder if this man was an ancestor.

William Dalrymple, the father, was surgeon to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital. In 1840, appeared "Cursory Notes on the Morbid Eye," by Robert Hull, of Norwich; this work is dedicated to William Dalrymple, and from the dedication, rather a long-winded one, I extract the following. "With ophthalmic pathology your name has been long conjoined. More than twenty years have elapsed, since your ligature of the carotid artery finally established the practice, adopted by Mr. Travers, for orbital aneurysm by anastomosis."

"Your son, the assistant-surgeon of the Royal Infirmary in London, maintains the connection of the name of Dalrymple with ophthalmology. By his scientific work on the anatomy of the eye; by his practice as a surgeon, much consulted on its diseases; by the prospect of success, which awaits him in the scene of his unwearied studies. . . . Of the series of disciples, whom you have trained for the profession, not one but is proud of his instructor, not one but feels the value of your name for his own interest and prosperity.

"Quid sciret ille, perpauci adverterant. UBI didicisset omnes quaerabat. Nihil ab HOC pravum et perversum produci posse arbitrabantur. Such masters are daily becoming more rare. The money-maker; the trickster; the detractor have well-nigh supplanted those noble characters. All is pelf."

John Dalrymple took his M.R.C.S.Eng., in 1827, and settled in the City. In 1833, he was appointed Assistant Surgeon to the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital, at that time known as the London Ophthalmic Infirmary. It would seem that the Committee were pleased at the idea of appointing one who had not been trained in London. He served on the junior staff for the rather long period of ten years and became full surgeon in 1843, retiring in 1849. In 1847, an additional assistant surgeon was assigned specially to assist him in his work, which he was finding too much for him. When he resigned in 1849, the question of appointing
another assistant surgeon arose. The staff appear to have objected to this, and in doing so referred to Dalrymple's long-continued illness, which prevented him attending regularly on Wednesdays and Saturdays. His absence was so regular that an assistant surgeon attended to do his work. Occasionally Dalrymple felt well enough to attend. When he did so there would be three members of the staff seeing patients instead of two, and the dispenser was not equal to the extra work, e.g., a new assistant surgeon would only be in the way.

In spite of his retirement from the staff of Moorfields in 1847, I find that he was elected Consulting Surgeon to the North London Infirmary in this year; his duties in this latter post would have been far less arduous than the routine work of the out-patient department at Moorfields.

In 1850, Dalrymple was elected F.R.S. I have searched the indexes of the "Philosophical Transactions," and those of the "Proceedings of the Royal Society" from 1843 onwards, but only found one paper contributed to the Proceedings by him; viz., in 1849, entitled "A Description of an Infusory Animalcule allied to the Genus Notommata of Ehreberg, hitherto undescribed." This paper was communicated by Thomas Bell, Esq., Secretary of the Royal Society. In 1851, he was elected a member of the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England; he having been one of the band of 400 elected original Fellows of the College.

The obituary in the Medical Directory draws attention to his work as a microscopist and alludes to the fact that he was one of the founders of the Royal College of Chymistry.

I must record my indebtedness to Mr. Percy Flemming for calling my attention to a paper by White Cooper in the Lancet, May 26, 1849, describing a case of "protrusion of the eyes, in connection with anaemia, palpitation and goitre"; in other words, a case of Graves's disease. The author alludes to Dalrymple's explanation of the exophthalmos in the following words. "An absence of the proper tonicity of the muscles by which the eyes are retained in their natural positions in the orbit; and some amount of venous congestion of the tissues forming the cushion behind the globes. Dalrymple relates a case of a gentleman whose eyes were so protruded that they were nearly denuded of the protection of the upper lid by a constant and powerful spasm of the levator palpebrae superioris, which drew the lids so far upwards and backwards, that much of the sclera above the cornea was visible."

Dalrymple's sign, often confounded with Stellwag's sign, of retraction of the upper lid, in Graves's disease is well known, but I venture to think that few of the younger members of the ophthalmic fraternity know that it was described by an Englishman in the first place. Mr. Flemming says "naturally Dalrymple
explains the retraction of the upper lid as due to spasm of the levator palpebrae, as Müller’s muscle had not at that time been discovered (1884)."

Dalrymple’s gouge is an instrument which may not be very well known under that title at the present time. It is a grooved spud, and those who have worked in the clinic of Mr. William Lang at Moorfields will remember how fond he was of declaring that this grooved spud was the handiest implement imaginable for carbolizing a corneal ulcer.

The Anatomy of the Eye

This was Dalrymple’s first noteworthy publication. It appeared in 1834, when he was Assistant Surgeon to the London Ophthalmic Infirmary (R.I.O.H.). It was dedicated “to J. R. Farre, M.D., Physician, and to Frederick Tyrrell and John Scott, Esqrs., Surgeons, to the London Ophthalmic Infirmary, this work on the ‘Anatomy of the Human Eye,’ over the manifold disorders of which they exhibit so many proofs of consummate mastery and skill, is dedicated by their sincere friend, John Dalrymple.”

The preface is dated March, 1834, from 8, New Broad Street. The book is divided into four sections and forms a happy blend of extracts from the classical authors with his own observations from dissections, together with some illustrations (verbal) of clinical interest. Section 1 deals with the various investments of the eyeball, i.e., sclera, cornea, choroid, iris, ciliary body, and retina. Section 2 contains the humours of the eye and includes the lens. Section 3 deals with the accessories of the organ of vision, the orbits and their contents, the ocular muscles, arteries, veins, nerves, lymphatics, and the orbital fat. Section 4 includes the defences of the eyeball, the brows, occipito-frontalis, and corrugator-supercilii muscles, the lids, caruncle, conjunctiva, lacrymal apparatus, and ends with a description of the peculiarities exhibited by the human eye at different epochs of life. The whole ends with a note of correction drawn from a dissection performed while the work was in the press, and five plates of drawings of dissected eyeballs, lids, etc. These drawings were made by Dalrymple himself and were engraved on stone by W. H. Kearney, who also engraved the illustrations for Tyrrell’s “Diseases of the Eye.” The illustrations of each of these works are worthy of study; they are beautiful pieces of work.

An extract of clinical interest may be allowed in this place. “At the London Ophthalmic Infirmary during the years 1827-28, I had occasion to observe two or three cases of palsy of the iris (to be distinguished, however, from tremulous iris, which has frequently been so named), in each of which, the circular muscle
was alone affected. The radiating fibres contracted to within two-thirds of their natural length; a space nearly equal to that allowed for muscular contraction. As a consequence of the enlarged size of the pupil, a confused sense of dazzling ensued, the retina retaining its natural sensibility. In twilight, or during a dull day, the patients' perceptiveness of objects was reasonably distinct. Under the influence of a gradual, but full course of mercury, all these cases perfectly recovered, the pupil ultimately recovering its primitive size and mobility." My own copy of this work is a prize presented at St. George's Hospital for the session 1836-37, to Edmund Young. It contains the hospital coat-of-arms on the cover.

The Pathology of the Human Eye

Dalrymple's great atlas came out in 1852, the year of his death. It was dedicated to Sir James Clark, Bart., Physician to the Queen. The plan of the work was "to exhibit diseases of the eye as they occur in nature, in a series of drawings, with such explanations as shall identify them with symptoms and with the general treatment of the case. An extensive collection of drawings by the best artists has been made, under the superintendence of the late Mr. John Scott, and of the author, from cases seen at the Royal Ophthalmic Hospital in Moorfields. It is due to the memory of a late dear colleague, Mr. John Scott, who was removed from us in the vigour of his manhood by a premature death, to say that the plan of this work had been conceived by him, and preparations contemplated to give his collection of drawings to the public, in somewhat of a similar form; but time was not permitted to him, and he bequeathed to the author his valuable series of drawings, which, united to those collected by the latter during many years, have furnished a large stock, whence the present plates have been selected. The original water-colour drawings have been principally made by Mr. W. H. Kearney and by Mr. Leonard." The engraver was Mr. W. Bagg.

The atlas consists of 36 plates, each of which in the large majority of instances contains six illustrations of diseased eyes, with pages of printed matter giving short descriptions of the conditions illustrated. A few full-page illustrations are included. It is difficult for those who are not acquainted with the work in question to get an idea of the merit and real artistic beauty of these pictures. It will be sufficient to state that besides being works of art, the pictures are faithful to nature.

I note in the first edition of Dixon's "Diseases of the Eye," 1855, a rather sarcastic allusion in a footnote to the bright pea-green appearance of the pupil in glaucoma recorded in this atlas. In my own copy, whether from age or much handling, the "true sea-
green, or glaucous hue" has toned down to a colour that would not have evoked Mr. Dixon's rather contemptuous allusion, had he been alive to-day and able to correct his former impression.

The atlas concludes with a word of apology. The therapeutical part of the book has been necessarily curtailed as much as possible, and for practical purposes those methods of treatment only which the author has found serviceable have been mentioned.

"If the writer has unintentionally misrepresented the opinions of any author, he will be deeply sorry, and that he has done so in one instance at least, viz., as to the thickness of the apex of the conical cornea, he is ready to admit. To Mr. White Cooper, he feels it is due to make this amende, and it will best repair the error to refer his readers to an excellent monograph on the subject, lately published by Mr. Cooper. In the explanation to Plate 19, the author has also been in error in attributing the practice of administering turpentine in iritis to the late Mr. Carmichael, of Dublin, instead of the present very intelligent Mr. Hugh Carmichael, of the same place."

Dalrymple's continuous ill-health and early retirement led to the rapid rise of Sir William Bowman in the fields of practical ophthalmology.

Dalrymple died early in May, 1852. Some additional information emerges from an inspection of his will (1852, Vol II, folio 391). His will was made on August 15, 1851; he records his wish to be buried "in the catacombs of Highgate Cemetery, in the compartment already paid for, next to where my late father is buried." But if he dies "more than thirty miles from London, then he desires to be buried in whatever parish he may die in; the funeral to be as simple as possible, and not to cost more than £40 in any event."

"To Thos. Spencer Howard of 56, Grosvenor Square, the £100 he owes me." By a codicil, he leaves the same person various ophthalmic instruments in token of regard. No such name can be found in the Medical Directories of the time, nor does this man appear in the first issue of the Medical Register in 1859; so it is practically certain that he was not a medical man.

After recounting various shares in English railways, and in the Norwich Waterworks, he mentions a mortgage of William Bircham of Reepham in Norfolk; and goes on to deal with "a portrait of Dr. Wm. Hunter, said to be by Sir J. Reynolds," about which one would like to know more at the present time; "Silver salver presented to my late father; ditto presented to self by Mr. Stuart of Kelso; and gold watch by Gow."

The following relations are mentioned: brothers: Arthur, Archibald, and Donald; brother (?brother-in-law) Wallace Waters; sister, Kate Bircham; other sisters not named; mother-in-law not
named; and the Jannings family of Norwich, the Miss Jannings, "my relations." "To the Royal Ophthalmic Hospital my drawings of diseases of the eye for the use of the students."

The executors were his brother, Robert ffarre Dalrymple, of 2, Southwick Crescent, Hyde Park, and his brother-in-law, Thomas Bircham. The will was sworn to May 12, 1852; and probate was granted in London, May 15, 1852. The amount at which the estate was sworn is not mentioned.

His brothers Archibald and Donald were in practice in Norwich. Archibald was Assistant Surgeon to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital; he died before 1858. Donald was alive then; he was Surgeon-Accoucheur to the Norfolk Lying-in Charity, and Proprietor of and Surgeon to Heigham Retreat.

Those beautiful paintings of diseases of the eye are still preserved in the library of the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital.

In conclusion I must express my best thanks to Mr. Percy Flemming, who has placed his unrivalled knowledge of the history of Moorfields Hospital and its honorary staff at my disposal, in a series of extracts from his notes taken from the minutes of the meetings of the Managing Committee.

The frontispiece is reproduced from a lithograph which hangs in the Bowman Library, kindly photographed for me by Miss Blake. For leave to have this photo taken I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. W. G. Spencer, Hon. Librarian of the Royal Society of Medicine.

TRACHOMA IN PALESTINE. ITS EPIDEMIOLOGY AND A REVIEW OF MEASURES FOR DEALING WITH IT

BY

N. SHIMKIN, M.D., PH.D.

CHIEF OPHTHALMOLOGIST OF HADASSAH MEDICAL ORGANIZATION, HAIFA, PALESTINE

Review of Literature

The first information that came under my notice from a European source was the report published in 1896 by the Petrograd oculist, Dr. Th. German, who had been sent by the Russo-Palestine Society on a special mission to Syria and Palestine in order to examine the state of eyes of the school children under the care of the Mission, and to adopt measures against the eye diseases.

One thousand and ninety-six Arab children were examined by Dr. German in Palestine. Thirty-eight per cent. of the children