SPIDERS DISCHARGED FROM THE EYE.
HYSTERIC MONOMANIA.

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I was requested, on the 5th of February, 1840, to visit a young lady, from whose mother I received the following statement:—The patient had left the city of Charleston, S. C. (at which place I then was), to visit a friend who resided in the country. On the night of the 29th of January, while conversing in bed, she was sensible that some object had fallen from the ceiling of the apartment upon her cheek, just below the inferior lid. This caused her to apply the hand briskly and forcibly, in order to brush off what she supposed to be some one of the many insects so common in country houses, upon which the friend with whom she slept observed that, as the room was much infested with spiders, it was probable that the object which had fallen was one of them. In the course of the night she was awakened by a feeling of intense pain in her left eye, which continued at intervals until morning, when, upon examination, the eye was discovered to be highly inflamed and lachrymose. Ordinary domestic means were applied, and during the morning, feeling an intense degree of itching and irritation, she rubbed the lids together upon the ball, and removed two fragments, which were readily recognised as the *dismembered parts of a spider*. Her alarm in consequence became very great, and was much heightened when the same thing was repeated in the afternoon. She left for home, and arrived in Charleston on the 2nd of February. During the voyage her mind was much perturbed and under considerable excitement from the event, and when I paid my first visit on the 5th, the date mentioned in the early part of my statement, the following was her condition:—The right eye unaffected; the left turgid, inflamed, and weeping, and there *had been removed from it that morning, a spider*, imbedded in a mucous covering. It was entire, with the exception of two legs. The two preceding days before I had seen her, *three others* had been removed, and were now exhibited to me. I immediately submitted the eye to as close an examination as the irritable condition of the parts permitted, *without being enabled to discover the minutest portion of any foreign substance*. In order, however, to combat the pain and inflammation, I ordered leeches, saline-antimonial medicines, and evaporating lotions. I thenceforward visited her daily, until the 19th, and at every visit I removed either an entire or dismembered spider from the same eye. Before proceeding it will be well to mention that, during the interval between the 5th and 19th, I invited to an examination of the case Professors Geddings and Dickson, and Drs. Bellinger and Wurde-man. Dr. Dickson on one or two occasions also removed these objects from the patient's eye. I made, assisted by Professor Geddings, the most minute scrutiny, with a view of discovering, first, whether there could possibly exist a nidus within the orbit for these animals; secondly, whether a sac containing their ova was there concealed; and, thirdly, if any communication between the eye and nose could account for their appearance. For these purposes, the superior and inferior palpebræ were everted with great care, traversed thoroughly with a blunt probe,

and afterwards I threw injections around the internal lining, but all to no avail. The anterior and posterior nares were closely examined by strong light, both of the sun and candle, yet we could not perceive the slightest trace of any means by which either ova, insect, or nidus could be retained.

The sensations always precursory to their removal were, a sense of burning in the ball, a pricking of the superior lid, proceeding more or less severely around the orbit, until it assumed a fixed pain within the lower lid, upon the eversion of which by myself, if present, or by her mother, in my absence, the spider, always dead, would be discovered enshrouded in its mucous bed, and removed by means of the finger or probe. I now resume the order of their discharge. From the 19th they were removed from both eyes, and so continued until the 23rd, when again they became confined to the left, and afterwards from each eye alternately until the 5th of March, when truce was had until the 10th. During this interval the eyes resumed their normal condition, but again on the 10th the inflammation was renewed and the discharge of spiders recommenced, the right eye being now chiefly the depository. Up to the date, during which time my visits were unremittingly made, none other than general observations were kept, but, the spider-making power appearing so inexhaustible, a more circumstantial diary was thought necessary.

March 10. Two spiders.

11. Two; pain over right orbital region, passing gradually over the frontal sinus to the left; sharp pricking pains upon pressure.

12. Previous to my visit one from the left eye, *which was much less inflamed than the right*.

13. Eyes much improved in appearance; one discharged since my last visit, and another just previous to my departure this morning. As this discharge served greatly to perplex the views at which I shall arrive before I conclude this paper, it may not be irrelevant to notice it. I have mentioned the scrupulousness with which the eye and its appendages were examined in order to elicit, if possible, any clue by which to unravel this engima, and the fruitlessness of those exertions. It appears, then, that, on the day of this visit (the 13th), a spider was removed before my arrival. A servant was despatched for it to a neighbour's, whither it had been sent for examination. Some time elapsed before her return, during which time I sat in such a relative position to the patient as to preclude all possibility of deception, and I had this day, as was my wont at every visit, made a careful examination of the eye, without discovering a vestige of any kind of substance. Upon the return of the servant I arose to depart, at which moment the patient complained of pain, and, in a few seconds, by turning down the lower lid, I removed another spider.

15. Eyes extremely healthy and clear. On the 13th, just after my visit, the mother removed three spiders, two entire and one broken; also a *putrid substance*, the precise nature of which I could not define. No others discharged to date.

17. None since 15th; right eye more affected, upper lid much irritated and swollen; left eye healthy.

18. Right eye still inflamed, discharged a portion of web from the inner canthus.

19. Eyes the same, *another piece of web*.

20. Eyes perfectly natural. After my departure on the 19th, there was removed a *sacculum containing ova*.

27. None since the 20th until to-day. The left eye being inflamed and painful, she was advised by a friend to insert an eye stone, which, at its exit, protruded *one spider of the long-legged kind, entire*.

April 6. None since the 27th ultimo. Eyes healthy, and generally improved in their appearance.

13. None since the 6th. Eyes healthy; has used them since my last visit in sewing and reading without inconvenience.

May 14. None since the 13th of April. Eyes healthy until a few days past; to-day they are weak, lachrymose, and slightly injected. They, however, improved under remedial measures, and the case terminated.

The total number of spiders removed from commencement were between forty and fifty. During the progress of this very singular case, the treatment was regulated according to the greater or less degree of local or general disturbance. The patient was restored to good health, and continued so uninterruptedly to the date of my leaving Carolina in November, 1840.

I have presented the facts as succinctly as possible, and here, perhaps, in the opinion of many, it should rest; but other considerations may offer themselves to warrant a further notice. They are these:—First, a case so anomalous, and of so unusual occurrence, could not well exist without necessarily exciting an intense degree of public curiosity, and, in fact, becoming, as it did, a subject of general notoriety and discussion in the various public presses of the union, all of which, however, were strictly unprofessional, as this is the first entire and correct statement yet made on the subject by myself. Secondly, the character and respectability of the patient, as well as her mother, being familiarly known to me for many years, preclude the remotest suspicion of any desire to impose, or to acquire a spurious notoriety on the part of the daughter, or of the countenance of fraud by the mother. Thirdly, the pathological history of the patient, which I will proceed to give, and which has induced me to distinguish this case as one unequivocally of *hysteria monomania*.

In adopting this rationale, I am of opinion that I conform more strictly to the category within whose scope are embraced so many equally singular and otherwise inexplicable perversions of the nervous system, and under the influence of which the most remarkable anomalies have been produced. I, moreover, am disposed to regard it rather as a melancholy though interesting feature of *disease*, than a subject of levity to be classed among the nine-day wonders of every day report. The father of the patient was a man of peculiarly nervous temperament and excitability. The patient from her childhood exhibited a due inheritance of that temperament, which became more strongly developed at that age, which, in females, so strikingly calls into action the consentaneous play of every nervous affinity. The establishment of the catamenial period corresponded with this complication. Her natural disposition was variable—at times

cheerful, sometimes gloomy, but more commonly timid and reserved.

In 1839 I attended her for an attack of chorea, during which many peculiarities were observable, and a few months preceding the invasion of the case now under consideration, she was under my care for a neuralgic affection, terminating in a tremulousness of her upper extremities corresponding with what Good, in his *Neurotica*, recognises as "*synclonus tremor*," except that here the morbid action is exhibited on attempt at voluntary motion, whereas in this case it was independent of such causes. In the presence of these facts, to wit, the entire confidence entertained, not only by myself, but all others, in the strict veracity and irreproachable integrity of the parties, the predisposing and salient qualities in the idiosyncrasy of the patient, and the indisputable, though too frequently unexplained, effects resulting from a morbid condition of the nervous system—effects impressing their astounding influences, not only upon the physical, but also upon the psychological nature of man—can we, without becoming amenable to the charge of an indifference incompatible with the proper spirit of inquiry, which is so peculiarly the province of medical philosophy, refrain from devoting a little time to the investigation of this case?

Previously to any considerations touching the mental agency involved in this history, I will refer in abstract to a few instances, which, if not even in strict analogy, are, nevertheless, not devoid of interest, either as objects of science or curiosity. * * *

[Here Dr. Lopez enumerates several instances of pin and needle swallowing, and cases in which insects have been found in various parts of the body; but none of the latter have any analogy to the present case.]

It now remains to attempt some explanation as to the means by which the spiders obtained their "local habitation" in the eyes of my patient. As might be supposed, conjectures were not idle, and the reasons assigned assumed their complexion in proportion as the credulity or scepticism of individuals prevailed. Those who yielded to the first, of course resorted to the intervention of miraculous agency, while the latter class believed it to be an artful endeavour to impose upon the community. I need not reiterate how unjust and unphilosophical such suspicions must appear under the historical features of this case. The only attempt to explain it by a natural and direct probable cause was published by a Mr. Meddler, of Erie, Pennsylvania. In a letter addressed to the postmaster of Charleston, he gives the natural history and habits of the *wood-spider*, which, he says, unlike the rest of that class of insects who propagate their young from eggs, "*bring them forth in perfect form*," and the female carries them about, attached to the extremity of the tail. Mr. Meddler thinks, therefore, that it was one of this kind which fell upon the young lady's cheek, and that the effort to brush it off separated the young from the point of attachment, upon which they took different directions, some into the eyes and others into the nostrils, whence they "*could easily pass*" to the eyes, and become killed there by the touch. He also thinks that the spiders discharged from the eyes "*were at different stages of maturity, and not of different species*."

Now, Mr. Meddler errs in every particular. The wood-spider bring forth their young in "perfect form." We have shown that one of the articles removed on the 20th of March was a *sacculus containing ova*. Again, his idea of their passage into the eye at the moment of accident is disproved, because I have stated the extreme care with which I repeatedly examined that organ and all its appendages; and *surely if the extraordinary number discharged from first to last had been lodged therein, they could not have escaped observation*. They were not in the nostril, for I have also said that due exploration was there made; moreover, the communication between the nose and eyes *even in a healthy condition*, could not possibly have admitted the passage of bodies as large as many of these spiders were, much less under the high state of inflammation and swelling in which they were almost constantly found. Lastly, Mr. Meddler, deriving his history of the case solely from newspaper reports, originating with persons unacquainted with its character and progress, errs in thinking that the spiders were only "at different stages of maturity," and not of different species. The spiders removed from the eye were subjected to close microscopic examination by myself, assisted by several professional gentlemen accustomed to scientific investigations, among whom was the Rev. Dr. Bachman, whose reputation precludes all doubt, and we discovered at least *three different species*, distinguished by the anatomical classification of *Latreille, Walkenar, and Hentz*. But even supposing them to have been lodged "in perfect form," the fact that they were subjected to a residence in depraved secretions unfit to preserve the lives of insects, forbids the belief that they could have reached the different stages of size and maturity which they presented, much less so then could we suppose them to have been hatched by incubation either in the eyes or nostrils. I am, then, constrained to discard from my mind the presumption that they were lodged and perfected *previously to their discharge*, or that they were placed there by the patient in a *healthy condition of feeling*, and with a desire to impose.

The only suggestion left for my adoption is this:—That from all the preceding history of my patient, there existed a want of nervous integrity, so operating upon the mind as to produce the form of disease which I have distinguished in my text as *hysteric monomania*; and I am induced to think that the various types of mental irregularities, which an unbalanced nervous system is so familiarly known to produce, sustain the belief. It is needless, on this occasion, to investigate the diversified operations of the human mind in its physical and pathological relations, or to refer to the multifarious phases it is capable of assuming under the excitement to which it is subjected by the agents which are perpetually at work upon its impressionable nature; suffice it to say, that the history of the different forms of insanity, from the highest degree of concentrated fury to the most subtle shade of the mind's day-dream, present arguments and examples sufficiently numerous to render my view of this case at least plausible.

At the incipency of the case, I do not for an instant doubt the presence of those fragments of spiders, and perhaps one or two entire, but my opinion is, that

subsequently terror, superinduced upon the idiosyncrasy described, dethroned the judgment; hallucination usurped its seat; a morbid concatenation was excited, and the patient, under the control of this influence, was urged irresistibly to introduce them from day to day, until the morbid series was exhausted. I cannot express myself more forcibly than by adopting the language of M. Ollivier addressed to the court at Paris, in behalf of a young girl arraigned for the murder of an infant. She confessed to *have given it ten pins to swallow from time to time*. M. Ollivier said, "he was inclined to attribute the present act to *one of those unaccountable perverse impulses which are not unfrequent in certain females, more especially about their menstrual periods*." (*Lancette Francaise*, 1839.) M. Dupuytren says, "I have seen, at the Hotel Dieu, a great number of women and children who *had been affected with the strange mania of swallowing pins and needles*." He then gives the case in detail, and concludes by saying, "On examining the body after death, *several hundred pins and needles* were found scattered through the viscera, muscles, cellular substance, &c."

I will, lastly, merely refer to that extraordinary form of insanity described in the "*Journal de Progres*," for 1828, under the title of *Periodical Vino-Mania*. It is reported by M. Pierquin, who says, "The disorder commenced fifteen years ago in the shape of an *irresistible impulse* to swallow wine day and night without the possibility of satiety. The *paroxysms* last from two to three months, with an interval of equal duration, when it returns again *without any prodrome* that might indicate its approach."

I here close this case, extraordinary in its character under any aspect, and, if my view of it be a correct one, it will afford another to the many which are to be found in nearly every work professing to analyze the yet inscrutable character of the human mind.—*Amer. Journ. Med. Sci.*, July 1843.

Mobile, Ala., April 26, 1843.

ON THE USE OF BLEEDING IN SOME CASES OF MENTAL DERANGEMENT;

WITH CASES.

No. II.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL
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GENTLEMEN,—There is another class of cases of mental derangement, to which I would draw the attention of the practitioner, requiring the use of the lancet more or less freely, according to circumstances; and these are cases which appear in the first beginning to be traceable to some mechanical injury. But as they are not all distinguished by the broad lineaments which mark the approach of other diseases, or even other forms of this disease, they in some measure challenge his foresight to detect them, or rather, to anticipate them; for the admonition of Dr. Graves, which I took the occasion to allude to in my last paper, comes into bearing with equal, if not with increased, force in the cases now to be considered. The after consequences of some of these cases are often most distressing, the