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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

CONNEXION OF INSANITY WITH DISEASES IN THE ORGANS OF PHYSICAL LIFE.

ILLUSTRATED BY A REMARKABLE CASE.

By J. COWLES PRICHARD, M.D., F.R.S., &c.

In most of the necroscopical researches into the causes of mental aberrations which have been set on foot, either in England or in France, the principal, if not the almost undivided attention of anatomists has been directed to the discovery of morbid changes in the brain. Our German neighbours, who have been thought, in many other departments of knowledge, to take wider and more comprehensive views, though not to be more practical or sound in judgment, than either the French or English, have, in the pursuit to which I have adverted, taken a different course. The school of Nasse, in particular, have, in numerous publications,* directed the attention of pathologists to connections which are often to be traced between the different manifestations of insanity and various morbid phenomena discovered after death in the organs subservient to physical life. The same path has been followed more recently by Jacobi, whose various works on subjects connected with insanity, equally remarkable for the practical sense as for the deep philosophical investigation which they display, entitle their author to the highest rank among the living writers of this class.† Jacobi even goes so far as to call in question the established opinion of this time, which regards the disorders of the vascular, the gastric, the enteric, the hepatic, and the progenitive systems, as associated with morbid states of the mental faculties in a remote and secondary degree; while affections of the brain are looked upon as immediately and essentially connected with the manifestations of disordered intellect. Jacobi has not expressed his opinion precisely in this manner; but it would appear, from a variety of passages in his works, that he looks upon effects produced upon the sensorium and the mind, through the medium of the stomach, or any of the viscera of physical life, as not less immediately brought about by the action of the material organism on the intellectual or sensitive power, than the impressions produced in the mind by a blow on the head, or by any powerful agency exerted immediately on the brain. This sequence, as he thinks, is more easily un-

derstood, as it is more frequently or more distinctly exemplified in a variety of phenomena, both healthy and morbid, connected with the state of the feelings or moral faculties, and their manifestations. The phenomena of moral insanity, or of a disordered state of the affections and moral feelings, without any corresponding lesion of the understanding, or of the reasoning faculties, furnishes, or appears at least, *prima facie*, to furnish a firm ground whereon to maintain the negative position in regard to the participation, or, at least, the primary influence of the brain, in the development of an extensive series of psychological phenomena. Herein Jacobi assents to the opinion which I ventured some time since to put forth; and which was, at first, thought extremely improbable;—that a mental disorder exists, fully to be recognised by particular trains of symptoms, in which the moral, not the intellectual, part of the human mind is essentially disturbed. To this I affixed the name of moral insanity; while, to another class of mental disorders, consisting in irregular affections of the will, or in unaccountable voluntary impulses, without motive or rational design, the designation of instinctive impulses, or instinctive insanity, is equally applicable.* I shall not attempt, at present, to enter into the *rationale* of the class of mental disorders to which this writer alludes; or to discuss the question, whether in those cases of insanity in which the primary cause, or the primary morbid change, has its seat in the organs of physical life, there always intervenes a morbid condition of the brain, which last is the immediate antecedent of disturbance of the mental faculties. The most important thing, in a practical point of view, is to establish the fact that the principal and fundamental cause of insanity is, in many instances, to be sought, not in the brain, but in some other region of the body. Of this, I believe that most persons who have enjoyed many opportunities of observation, and are capable of making a good use of them, are now well convinced. The opinion, however, is yet so far from being the prevailing one, that it is worth while to lay before the public any striking and decided example that may carry strong conviction on the subject; and this precisely is the object of the present communication.

A. B—, a lady highly accomplished, and of great mental endowments, pious, affectionate, and sincere, when about thirty-five years of age, without any

* In a variety of papers in the *Zeitschrift für Psych. Aerzte*, 1818, and the following years.

† In Dr. Max. Jacobi's *Beobachtungen über die Pathologie und Therapie der mit Irresyn verbundenen Krankheiten*. Elberfeld, 1830. Also different papers in the *Zeitschrift für die Beurtheilung und Heilung der Krankhaften Seelensustände*, von Max. Jacobi und Fr. Nasse. Berlin, 1838 u. s. f.

‡ *Zeitschrift*, B. 1. S. 78.

* This last is the disorder described by Pinel under the title of "*Manie sans délire*." It was observed by M. Esquirol, in his last work, that this affection is totally distinct from that which I have described first in the *Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine*. The term moral insanity is now in common use among the superintendants of lunatic asylums, both in Britain and in the United States, as the distinguishing term for this species of mental disease. It is said that, in some of the United States, nearly one-eighth of the whole number of lunatics committed by the courts belong to this class.

assignable cause, except, perhaps, an over-strained attention to a course of study which, from charitable motives, she had been induced to undertake, and from consequent neglect of exercise, and the means of promoting her bodily health, became suddenly low-spirited and hypochondriacal. During the early period of her illness, she fancied herself to labor under a variety of complaints, over which she was ever brooding, and suggesting causes and remedies. Her whole temper and character became changed. Formerly devoted to her duties, and to works of benevolence to others, she now thought only of herself, and her complaints. She was even indifferent about the state of her own person. When her complaints assumed a definite form, they always referred to her stomach and alimentary canal. She thought herself over-filled with food when she had taken a very small quantity; and, under this impression, she almost starved herself.

After many months spent under the unremitting attendance of her mother, and her near relations (during which time she made repeated attempts to escape out of the house, in order to elude importunities, and almost compulsion, to take food), it was determined by her friends (who found it impossible, otherwise, to prevent her from sinking under exhaustion) to send her to a lunatic asylum, where she passed the last years of her life. While there, she was induced, though not without great difficulty, and a constant threat of compulsion if she resisted, to take a moderate quantity of the most nutritious and digestible food. Her body, which had been very much emaciated, was then restored to its usual degree of fulness; she had always been of light and slender frame.

It was her constant entreaty to be spared the pain occasioned by taking food. She was ever intent upon the means of dissuading her friends from forcing her to eat; and when this was given up as hopeless, she employed her utmost effort to elude their attempts. Every imaginable stratagem was put in practice. Formerly high-minded and upright, she now descended to the meanest tricks, in order to promote this one object, to which her mind was ever directed.

At her entreaty, the prescribed quantity of solid food was decreased from time to time, and a milder and more fluid diet substituted for it. On these occasions she became weak and feeble, and emaciated; and it was found necessary, although her complaints of suffering were rendered more distressing and importunate, to return to a fuller quantity; but this was always the smallest quantity that could support her strength. Notwithstanding her complaints, there was no perceptible indication of abdominal disease.

After remaining some years nearly in the same state, she was suddenly attacked with diarrhoea, which, in a few days, notwithstanding all ordinary means used to stop it, carried her off. She retained acute intelligence, and all her morbid impressions to the last hours of her life.

The autopsy was made carefully two days afterwards. The following were the most remarkable appearances:—

The cranium was remarkably light and thin, and permeable to light.

Between the layers of the arachnoid was much fluid. This membrane was opaque where it covers the posterior lobes of the cerebrum, and raised by fluid effused between it and the pia mater, separating the convolutions. Ventricles full of perfectly colorless serum. The brain and dura mater were very exsanguineous. Altogether, the fluid effused amounted to five ounces.

The lungs were extensively beset with tubercles.

But the ultimate, if not the primary, cause of the disease was apparent in the intestinal canal. The ileum was beset, through nearly its whole extent, with large, round, or irregularly-shaped patches, occupied by congeries of tubercles. On these patches were extensive ulcerations, of irregular surface, and with much thickened edges. In many parts these ulcerations occupied the whole circuit of the intestinal tube. The tuberculous matter had been deposited underneath the serous coat, forming a hardened base for the ulcerations which took place on the mucous surface.

This dissection afforded proof that the perpetual complaints made by the patient of pain and suffering in the abdomen had an organic cause, and were not unreal, as it had been sometimes suspected. As these complaints had been uniform, and had continued from the commencement of the disease, it may be inferred as highly probable that the organic disease in the intestinal canal had been coëval with the mental disorder, and the foundation of the whole train of morbid symptoms. The history of this case furnishes, on this view, an example of insanity mainly dependant on a diseased state of organs very remote from the brain. Serous effusion, indeed, existed within the skull; and this is known to be a very frequent phenomenon in cases of insanity; but it may, perhaps, be regarded rather as an effect than a cause.* Tubercular disease in the lungs is likewise frequently discerned in melancholic patients, as Esquirol has particularly observed; but this rather supervenes upon, than occasions melancholia. On comparing all the phenomena which the history of the case displays, I think it, on the whole, manifest that the abdominal disease was the primary deviation from health; but how this may have operated in giving rise to the complaints which appear to have resulted, I do not pretend to explain.

* In 120 out of 216 cases, Greding found effusions between the dura and the pia mater. Between the pia mater and the surface of the brain, in 29 out of 100 manics. He found the lateral ventricles in 28 very full of serum; in 23 ready to burst; in 10 out of 24 melancholics astonishingly distended. Third ventricle quite full in 57 of 100 manics; and in 16 of 24 melancholics. Fourth ventricle ready to burst in 80 out of 100 manics, and empty only in 3; completely distended in every one of 24 melancholics. By the same writer it was observed that the skull was remarkably thick in 167 out of 216 cases. In many cases it was remarkably thin, and holes were found in the inner table in 115 out of 216 cases.

DEATH OCCASIONED BY THE ADMINISTRATION OF A TOBACCO ENEMA. BY M. JAPIOT.

A man, aged fifty-six, had a strangulated hernia, for which, after various ineffectual attempts at reduction, an enema of fifteen grammes of tobacco was administered. A quarter of an hour afterwards symptoms of most intense narcotism came on, and the patient died twenty-five minutes after the administration of the enema.—*Gaz. des Hop.*, Dec. 12, 1843.