AN

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

Insanity

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BY

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Having been connected with a hospital for the insane, all the time that I have been a student of medicine, I know of no subject that would more profitably engage my attention, on this occasion, than that of Insanity. Although it is not a disease of so frequent occurrence as many others yet it is of sufficient importance to impress its self upon the minds of all thinking men, particularly physicians. What a school of morality is an insane asylum. What thoughts suggest themselves to the reflective mind in passing through its wards. Within the confined limits of an insane hospital all the passions in their utmost tension may be seen at full play. In all their terrific vigour, cruelties at work, the various incubations of the minds, unpunished and at large pour out their full ebb.
The notions that actually society at large
Can there be seen verified in their fullness
In every field in which desire has prompted
Man to claim distinction we find them
its devotee, we have the gladiator at the bar,
The physician at the bedside, the minister
in the pulpit, the soldier in the field,
And the monarch on his throne, each,
Clad in the imaginary habiliments of
This Oration, exercising to saluatorial
mimicry the prerogatives of their fancied
position & steadfast in their assumption
In this conflict of mind with the body,
we can, but think of Th transcendental's fanciful idea
That should the body die the mind,
Poor damages before a court of
Justice, it would be found that
the defendant had been a ruinous tenant
To the plaintiff. A wholesome lesson
Might be thrust upon my brightening,
And clearing up to our weak conception
The epistle of the law & the prophets,
do and others. As you would that others should do, we
The Causes of Insanity are attributed to various, moral and physical agents. In mental diseases, alteration of the intellectual faculties are marked long before the patient can be pronounced insane. Eccentricities, or oddities as they are commonly termed, are frequent precursors of mania. So distinct and yet multiplied are the causes which produce that state of predisposition to disease, in which the germ of the malady looks latent and unsuspected by the casual, or even sometimes the most experienced observer. So numerous are the causes which precede the incubation of insanity, so wholly and incompetent and the friends and relatives of the unfortunate creatures who become thus afflicted, to determine that cause. That through this inconstancy for observation and judgment, is it that the origin and causes of insanity are and have been the most difficult of solution.
Through ignorance often, and neglect frequently, and yet still often through a want of a proper appreciation of the advantages to accrue to the physician in this treatment from a true knowledge of this cause, through a false or false in its inception, that often induces parents or friends to conceal it, we are left in ignorance as to conjecture to assign the agent to the precise position, to the malady. This exciting or developing cause is not as often concealed, through these ill-conceived and detrimental notions and by these means the physician is so often and repeatedly deprived of information, the concealing which does the sufferer no good, but sadly retards the recovery of the afflicted, and debarrs them perhaps of the benefit of a course of treatment which probably otherwise they would receive.
From such and many other minor and greater evils arose the difficulties in assigning the
oncises of the various types of insanity arise.
With these insuperable embarrassments
attendant upon the disease, which arise from
the working of our too daring Gancies
Physicians & Philosophers have long sought
to arrive at their ultimate cause with
but partial success.
Notwithstanding these difficulties, and yet
these of greater magnitude, arising therefrom
with respect to the classification of
mental maladies, there are, with
great propriety gathered all the types
under two general headings, or divided
them into two great divisions—those
arising from moral, and those of the
physical causes. Amongst eminent
men, some highly inculcated with
Materialism claim to the opinion, that
in all, post mortem. Examinations of the
insane, physical causes are discernible.
Lawrence affirms that in the Examinations
of the heads of many Indians, scarcely one was to be seen, that did not afford obvious
manifests of Disease. The Celebrated Magazines
and others of distinction are of this opinion.
On the other hand, Dr. Pinel, a man renowned
for his anatomical investigations, affirms
that he never saw in the cavity of the
skull of the dead Indians, other appearances
or lesions, that are observable in
those of persons who have died of
apoplexy, epilepsy, nervous fever,
convulsions, &c. Amongst this confusion
of opinion with the eminent it is no
easy matter to come to a fair conclusion.
Yet this much may be said, that there
exist such a wonderful, acute
and vivid sympathy of the brains with
other organs, and most especially with
the abdominal viscera, the morbid
condition in which the brain is some-
times found may have arisen from
a primary or irritated condition of some
other organ.
Bene the difficulty in asserting insanity generally a primary or secondary affection. Physical causes act alike upon the brain and Abdominal System. Compressions and Concussion of the Brain will occasion nausea, vomiting and hepatic affections, and the presence of Worms in the Intestines will excite Commissions & epilepsy.

Moral Causes may also act directly or indirectly upon the Brain and sympathizing parts. Violent emotions produce immediate and evident effect upon the digestive apparatus, which may in turn act by their sympathetic connection upon the Brain and mind, although that connection is not yet definitely or conclusively established. But that mental emotions whether producing any perceptible alteration in the physical condition of the individual or not, do in general various Types of Insanity is clearly demonstrated by Experience.
Intoxicating substances and stimulants are considered among the most influential of all the exciting causes, among certain classes in England, Germany, and America, whilst the opinion does not obtain with respect to France. According to Lee, a large proportion of the admission into pauper Lunatic Asylums arise from this cause, most especially in the case in large manufacturing towns and districts.

Dr. Mowbray is clearly of the opinion that many cases arranged under ill health, fear of poverty, loss of property, domestic afflictions, religious excitement, would more properly fall under this head. Richard whilst he says that a large proportion of admissions into Insane Hospitals are to be attributed to this cause, remarks, that in general they are to be reckoned among those most easily cured. Lee says again that there is something in the habitual stimulation of alcohol, which is calculated to weaken.
The reasoning faculties undermind the judgement; perturb the moral sense, and induce disease in important organs, as the brain & liver, which indirectly lead to mental unreasonableness. This is a fact too well established to need argument, at our hands. Yet on the contrary, it is contended that in Mania, not the Spirit, or the effects upon the System, that produces Insanity, but the reverse, the Confinement, the Chastisement, even it is plain, that enemies which producing such, wondrous workings in the Mind, destroys its equilibrium, & Mania. Mania. Mania.

And various forms of dementia, & depression.

In confirmation of this hypothesis we are cited to patients in Asylums whose Maladies are ascribed to intemperance as being invariably those naturally high toned, & sensitive, generous & honorable, and in most cases of this type it is remedied that loss of property or—
adversity of affairs are almost invariably
precursors to mental aberrations.
It is further urged in argument that the
habits of the Savage sustain this opinion.
Indians more than any other race being
given to strong drinks, and yet scientific
investigation has as yet failed in discovering
Insanity as a disease of frequent occurrence
among their many tribes. In the Negro-
population of our country, which is
given to drinks in excess, the proportion
of Insane is not so great, as with the
educated white population.
Statistics it is true will not sustain in
the assertion, that all the Insane are
educated; on the contrary, majority of patients
in Asylums in America, are those of
very limited education. Yet I can but
suggest there, that a majority of these, are
persons of more than ordinarily developed
passions, probably owing chiefly to their want
of education—merely wayward dispositions,
in their youth, & mostly of an imaginative bias.
The majority of patients in the Tennessee Hospital for the Insane, who are natives of the State, are from the Mountainous portion of the Country. The natural greenness and beauty of whose scenery, is admirably calculated to engender reflection and affection. Good and vigorous to the imagination is pleasingly adapted to develop in certain tempers, and from Sluggishness and Melancholy. I do not mean to understand that all who are attached with Malady are persons of more than ordinary reflective minds. For physical causes operate pretty much the same way upon all minds. It has been said by some writers upon insanity, that those who belong to professions in which the imagination is incessantly engaged and not controlled or directed by it, tend to the functions of their understanding in its excitement; these most susceptible to vitality and fatigue, are much the more directly affected.
This assertion in all probability may
be true to some extent, although there are few persons, whose vocation in life,
demands, predominant exercise of the thinking
faculties, that are symptoms of Lunatic Afflictions.
Mental contusion. Constitution. Climate
Diet. Hereditary predispositions. Education.
Religious solicitude. &c. are enumerated
as causes of Insanity.
It would be impossible in this paper,
to consider each of the many agents,
designed to cause alteration of mind,
or to produce that state described
by Esquirol, in the following terms
as Insanity, which is a Cerebral Affection
Ordinarily Chronic. And without Fever.
Characterized by disorder of Sensibility,
Understanding. Intelligence, and Will.
Or, probably equally as well, if not more
appropriately, by the late Dr. Bingham of
Oxford, when he says Insanity is a Chronic
disease of the brain, producing, either
arrangement of the intellectual faculties
or prolonged change of feelings, affections, and habits of the individual. Or probably yet more appropriately the term terms in general it is regarded as a disorder of the system, by which the sound and healthy exercise of the mental faculties is impeded and disturbed.

The multiplicity of causes of insanity precludes the possibility of the consideration of each. Even granting the writer the ability and experience necessary which is, far otherwise than the case. But I desire chiefly in this paper to draw attention to the statement that masturbation is a much greater source or cause of insanity than is generally ascribed to it. Whatever greatly predisposes or renders imminent action, both predisposes and directly decides aberrations of mind. Many of the causes affecting nervous energy favouring congestion on the brain engenders disease of other vital organs and the functions of the brain sympathetically a
Thus in the insipid Chemist we always perceive memory, that most noble attribute of reason, daily to wear away sense of the happy days of his boyhood. His tranquility at least has its faded remains. And staggered at discovering his own increasing imbecility. The shadows within himself, like the tortoise he hides his head, ashamed of the gaze of this fellow-man, he looks away not in the eye but in seclusion by continued indulgence in self-pollution, aggravates his malady and hastens the inevitable approach of total annihilation of thought. He becomes pale, his eyes week, and moving, the upper lid advances a leader of his flesh. His muscles become relaxed and flabby. Nervous and degenerative is the highest degree, he neither seeks nor finds pleasure in this old associate, but in seclusion recedes among his life. A prey to his wicked overwrought imaginations.
How appalling the reflections—how humiliating, disgusting—causing such indulgence. An evil of such magnitude is it increasing too daily as it does, with the luxury and ease of our pampered youth, that it earnestly demands the vigilant scrutiny of parents and those who have the tutoring of the young. So manifest, polluting, and destroying in its effects, producing in the female, who is just as prone to it, as the other sex, all the various and complicated disorders of the sexual organs. Lascivious—displacement of the uterus—difficult—suppressed or profuse menstruation—hysteria—catalepsy—vertigo &c. So easily, gradually, imperceptibly, and unconsciously, acquired is the habit, with the young, that the most vigilant observation is required to discover it. And no means neither by counsel wisely given or care properly taken should be spared or neglected to prevent it. When once it has gained the mastery of the unhappy victim, the confining—
Of their hands will not prevent the indulgence, 
visiting the parts will only succeed for a 
short time; antispasmodics act only partially, 
and have to be continued so long that they 
become insipidous. It is worthy of note, 
that in my experience, which however is very 
limited, I have ever found the invariable habit 
of the Epileptics. In all such cases it is not the 
remote cause, probably the exciting, or at least, 
it is a constant aggravator of the malady. 
How often unknown and unsuspected 
close the disordered mind, in the midst of 
this excitement, in the strife for those 
honors that elevate and ennoble his mind, 
add moral worth to this character, give 
tone to his position, and distinction in 
society, mean himself from all the 
fascinations of the social circle; the society 
of friends, and the company of the virtuous, 
to degrade, and destroy himself. By this 
means and meanly practiced. 
Could all the honors of the madhouse 
answer suddenly up to his imagination.
daily becoming more and more diseased with what loathing would the turn from his depravity, and read in refined society a balm for his self-declined, self-acquired and self-destroying habit.

The type that insanity proceeding from a vice, that whilst it destroyeth the physical powers, impairs the intellect, debases the moral (propensities) and altogether wholly degrades the creature in the scale of humanity, generally assumes, in the either of melancholia, Mono-Mania, or that form of dementia verging to imbecility.

I am inclined to believe that whilst a very fair (per cent) of cases are obtained in insanity, such would the tables be augmented were it not for the indulgence given by patients to this very bad practice.

The treatment generally pursued, by attention to the general health - taking moral exercises &c. This occasionally is productive of the most happy results, particularly in such cases as prove mine to appreciate their condition.