

AN
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

Hysteria

X

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BY

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To

Professor I M Watson M.A.

This Thesis

is

most respectfully dedicated

By

The Author

Hysteria

Of all the diseases which fill the Catalogues, there are none more remarkable for the frequency of their occurrence than this. It is also, an interesting disease. Not, on account of its fatality, but on account of its prevalence and the variety of its symptoms & the multitude of diseases which are cured by it.

Among the common people this disease is known generally by the name given above, though they generally call it the Hysterics.

This disease like most others, has its peculiar symptoms, though there are a great many symptoms developed during the course of the disease, which if taken and described separately would lead us to believe, that the patient was suffering from a complication of diseases.

The symptoms which are of most frequent occurrence are the flatus Hystericus and the Chrono

Hysterics, The former of these Symptoms has been compared by the patients to the Sensation of a Ball or some Solid Body felt in some part of the ~~Abdomen~~ which gradually ascends, and becomes fixed in the Throat, and gives rise to a Sensation of Choking, followed by the chief Characteristic of the disease - The other of these Symptoms to which the name of Clonus-Hystericus has been given is a kind of Neuralgic Spasm generally felt about the eye - -

These Symptoms are of most frequent occurrence, yet there are others which cannot be well described by the patient or any one else, and which are therefore known under the general name, of uneasy Sensations. These may not always be present and then the Practitioner has nothing to indicate the nature of the disease except the Consultation. Which will of itself lead to nothing Spe-

cific. From the simple fact that this Con-
vulsion or one very similar to it, occurs in
other diseases -

Independent of the Convulsion, this disease
is characterized by diversified functional
disorder. The whole system of symptoms
of the disease may be described in a descri-
ption of the paroxysm.

This description as given by most authors
include all the symptoms of the disease
proper. But the symptoms arising from
functional derangement require a ~~separate~~
auto description. In the milder cases this
sensation of the glabus hystericus is followed
by bursts of weeping or of laughter which
are of short duration, but in the more violent
forms of the disease, the patient is attacked
suddenly, he suffers from great mental and
bodily agitation. Oppression of the chest.

difficulty of breathing. The muscles in some cases are violently contracted, the face the ordinary expression of countenance which is replaced by a vacant stare. The face, if before standing, throws her hands about convulsively. Attempts to bite herself, or throw about her twists her body into all manner of violent contortions. The jaws work with a sort of grinding motion. The heart palpitates. Sometimes there is an apparent want of consciousness.

These phenomena gradually subside and the patient returns to her natural state, and thus the paroxysm may end, to return again with the same phenomena in a short time, or the patient may be free from them for a considerable length of time.

The paroxysm may vary exceedingly in duration and intensity. It may vary from 15 minutes to several hours with occasional intermissions.

Sometimes, instead of the violent paroxysms
There is only a feeling of abdominal or pectoral
distress not amounting to a convulsive par-
oxysm - Several varieties of these parox-
ysms have been described by authors. "Some-
times the patient lies motionless & seeming-
ly unconscious, is capable of being raised
by the hands raised" The pulse at the wrist
is scarcely perceptible, the respiration scarce-
ly perceptible, The extremities are cold the gen-
eral appearance of the patient would lead to
the belief that she was dead, yet the expres-
sion of the face is not that of a dead person.
It is said that pressure be made on some
of the spinous processes, it will arouse the pa-
tient from her death like state -

Such is the hysterical Convulsion though it is
perfectly described.

The Functions of the organs contained in

The abdomen and thorax are liable to a certain degree, to become deranged during the progress of this disease, giving rise to many symptoms which have often been mistaken for real disease of the organs.

Respiration is sometimes for a time cut off by spasmodic closure of the glottis - giving rise to imperfect circulation.

Various diseases of the organs of the chest are sometimes simulated by this "Præteritis". The symptoms, arising from the spasmodic closure of the glottis, resulting from irritation, will only give way on the approach of asphyxia. This symptom is sometimes so magnified as to be mistaken for symptoms arising from the presence of foreign bodies in the lungs or trachea. A case is reported in which, tracheotomy had been performed for the relief of as

a patient), labouring under these Symptoms
The Circulation is variously deranged, giving
rise to Symptoms almost similar to those
resulting from Hypertrophy of the heart.
Palpitation, with various Modifications, of
the pulse - is frequently present

The Secretions of the Kidneys, and Liver,
are liable to become deranged, they may be
deficient or excessive. That of the Kidneys
is more liable to this derangement than the
other - Sometimes being so copious as to
resemble diabetes, at other times so mod-
ified & accompanied with Spurious Symptoms,
as to give rise to the Suspicion of the existence
of Calculus - The Suppression of the urine,
may be voluntary, frequently the patient loses
the power of Contract of over the bladder, from
a partial paralysis of the neck of the blad-
der, this may not continue for a great

length of time but during its presence it
may give rise to very distressing sensations.
When such cases do occur, the constitution
now, it is said protects itself, by vicarious
Secretions.

Nutrition, Seldomly Suffers. This, in fact
is considered by most authors as one of
the most striking characteristics of the
disease. When it does suffer it is from
an insufficient supply of food, resulting
from an inability, or rather a fancied in-
ability to swallow. This condition may
however occur after the patient has been
for a long time suffering from the disease.
"Then we are told that there is reason to
suspect the existence of some organic
disease".

Derangement of the reproductive system
may exist without any perceptible anatomical

Lesion, ~~as~~ Some authors contend that they
have found ~~an~~ Some lesion of the womb or
its appendage during the disease - But I don't
think there is any more than there is in any ^{organ} ~~other~~,
which in the chief majority of cases are Spurious.

Among the many diseases which are Simulated
by hysteria are various Nervous disorders among
which is Neuralgia - Though there is in general
an increased Sensibility in the whole System.

This may be located by the patient - either in the
face, head, neck or back - But these diseases
may all be found to ~~be~~ Spurious from the fact
that they are of so short duration, and from
a fixed law, that no two diseases of any kind
can have a place in the System at the same
time.

The Cause of Hysteria, has long been
a point of Contention among the great
lights of Medicine - One party contending that

The disease was entirely owing to some derangement in the Reproductive System of the Female. While another party, contended that this disease so complicated in its nature could have its origin nowhere else but in the Nervous System. Some of the older writers Hypocrites among the best, regarded the Uterus as an animal and attributed the phenomena of Hysteria to the Standings of this animal to the head liver and limbs. Galen refuted this notion but agreed in making the organ the Seat of the disease. It has also been attributed to indigestion and chronic inflammation of the Stomach -
Imperfectly Coagulated Blood, affecting the Brain.
A Morbid Condition of the Spinal Cord,
A Morbid Condition of the Nervous System generally, These several Philosophers set down the Spinal Cord as the Seat of the disease, and to sustain their position, using Janard

Instances in which injuries of the Spinal Cord
give rise to phenomena similar to that of
Hysteria.

I don't believe that a disease so com-
plicated in its symptoms, affecting the functions
of animal life so variously, could be attributed
to the derangement of any one set of nerves.
But in order for its production with the vari-
ous phenomena attendant upon it, the whole ner-
vous system must become deranged. And the
organs most supplied with nervous force are
the ones in which the disease during its
course is more apt to develop itself in the
form of some specific inflammation. (As I termed
inflammation) And that by the morbid action result-
ing from the morbid condition of the nervous
system we do not recognize any specific ^{any organ} disease of
but disease of the whole nervous system.
Or in other words, I do not regard the various

Phenomena manifested during the disease (Whether it be in the glands or tissues) as a diseased condition of the said Structure out of the nerves which supply the organ - Nervous power being one of the requisites in every organ for the proper performance of its function. It follows that a derangement or failure on the part of the nerves would lead to the inactivity of or a derangement of the functions of the organ. In the Secretory system, this derangement may consist in a change of quality, and quantity as seen in the Kidneys - In the Skin the derangement consists neither in the derangement of the secretion, nor in the quantity of matter eliminated, but in the Sensibility. In the large majority of cases the Skin's Sensibility is increased.

Hysteria is therefore a disease having its origin in a deranged state of the nervous

System. or Morbid excitability of the nervous System - The causes, of this disease may be said to be both predisposing, and exciting - Any thing that prevents the nervous System acquiring its proper development, or by acting as a depressing agent, either to the sanguiferous or nervous System, will act as a predisposing cause to this disease - -

This disease is becoming quite fashionable among a certain class of individuals known in Society as the upper Ten - , also among the female portion of ^{the unfortunate} towns who are by necessity doomed to an inactive life -

It has been attempted frequently by authors to point out the many evils arising from the manners in which females of at the present day are educated, also the evil effects arising from the manners in which the higher classes in Society spend their time, & excluded from the

light almost altogether. - Sentimental reading
has been put down as ~~a~~ predisposing cause
of some authors - Sedentary life. +

Among the many diatheses contracted by
the causes capable of producing a sedation
of the powers of animals, ^{life} We may say that
Lepidula is the most fatal and Hysteria
the most frequent.

Stimulating diet long continued has the
power of lessening the tone of the nervous
system and thereby acting as a predis-
posing cause. This disease may also be
transmitted by inheritance. "Parents of the
Hysterical Temperament are apt to trans-
mit the disease to their offspring" or a
predisposition to the disease, which pre-
disposition is strengthened by the subsequent
mode of life.

In women who are suffering from this

pre-disposition, sometimes the slightest
Shock is capable of bringing on the fit -
The most powerful of the exciting causes
are the various emotions of the mind, -
disappointed affection -

The diagnosis of Hysteria is in most
cases not very difficult. The diseases
for which it is most likely to be taken are
Epilepsy and the Convulsions sometimes atten-
dent upon the puerperal state.

In some cases it may be necessary to enquire
into the former habits of the patient, in order
to enable us to make out our diagnosis -

Hysterical fits are never so severe as the
epileptic, There is seldom seen foaming
at the mouth in hysteria, the face generally
bears a calm expression - The opposite
this condition is observed in Epilepsy, the
fit generally comes on abruptly. The patient

utters a Shriek, insensibility follows, as
Companied by violent Contractions, of the
Muscles, frothing at the Mouth: The Features
become black with Congestion.

Yet in the more mild forms of the epileptic fits
when there is no frothing at the Mouth, no
Turgescence of the face, where the Symptoms
are nearly the same as those of Hysteria. It
would be necessary for us to enquire into the
previous habits of the patient. If she is Subject
to these attacks we may put it down as a
case of Hysteria & treat it accordingly.
But if this be the first & is followed by another
more severe with well marked Symptoms
of epilepsy we may consider our patient in
a dangerous situation.

The epileptic fits generally increase in
severity with each returning paroxysm, while
in Hysteria the paroxysms are generally the same

Treatment.

In speaking of the Treatment of Hysteria most authors recommend different Treatment for what they call different forms of the disease, and each author has some Specific for each one of the numerous Symptoms which spring up during the progress of the disease.

I consider that each one of these Symptoms arise from the same Source, and whatever will relieve one will relieve all of them. Yet it may be necessary for our patients Comfort to relieve some of the attendant Symptoms. But we must not forget, that the Majority of these Symptoms are Spurious, and by relieving them we may encourage her in her deceit. But in Cases where there is actual disease, as, ^{inflammation} along the Spine it may be treated by

Counter irritation. The inability to Swallow
resulting from the Stiffness of the
jaws, may be treated by the Cold douche.

If called during the paroxysm one can do
nothing more than Stimulate the patient, &
prevent her injuring herself during the
Fit. We may prevent the Fit sometimes
by anticipating the precursory Symptoms,
by throwing Cold water on the face or by
letting her breathe the Vapor of ammonia.

The Spasmodic closure of the glottis is also
over come by the free use of Cold water, which
acts by producing violent inspiratory efforts.

The chief part of the treatment consists
in removing the Causes, both pre disposing,
and exciting. Though the pre disposing
Cause may be hereditary, by a strict attention
to the general health of the patient, and
the employment of proper remedies it

may be overcome. - The patient's vessels should
be kept open. As a tonic, we may make
use of that, which nature has so liberally
restored upon us, Cold water. - This when
properly applied has the power of giving
strength and tone to the system. -

The patient should be instructed to rise
early, make use of the Shower Bath, take
a proper amount of exercise. The diet
should be light but nutritious. In patients
who by being long subject to the disease, have
become anemic to a great degree - It may
be proper to use some of the ferruginous
preparations - The best is the carbonate
of Iron, given in regular doses. -

But in the large majority of cases, I think
it would be better to employ the cold Shower
Bath, enjoin upon the patient the necessity of
rising, and retiring early. -

Thus used and so accompanied, in my opinion
cold water will prove the most effectual
and durable Tonic. - The patient should
refrain from going to places of amusements
which are calculated to excite the passions

Thus treated, I think this disease would
be eradicated. - And by a proper mode
of life the miserable patient would be freed
from it entirely and might enjoy
her probation here as nature intended. -

Samuel C. Thompson