

AN

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

*Insanity*

SUBMITTED TO THE

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OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NASHVILLE,

FOR THE DEGREE OF

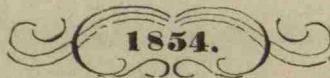
DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.

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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 prop-  
itably engage my attention, upon 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 -  
Humility 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 to their utmost tension  
may be seen at full play.  
In all their terrific vigour & crisis  
at work, the various incubations of  
the minds, unfettered and at large  
pour out their full & unbridled -

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The notions that actuate Society at large  
Can here be seen vented in their fullness.  
In every field in which desire has prompted  
Man to claim distinction, we find there  
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  
his vocation, exercising to plenary mag-  
-nitude the prerogatives of their fancied  
position - & steadfast in their assumption.  
In this conflict of mind with the body -  
we can but think of Plutarch's fan-  
-ciful idea - that should the body sue the  
mind, for 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 us, brightening  
and clearing up to our weak Conscience  
the Epitome of the Law & the prophets: Do  
unto others, as you would that others should do unto

The Causes of Insanity are attributed to various, Moral and Physical agents.

In Mental diseases, Aberration 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 lingers latent and unperceived by the Casual,

or even sometimes the most experienced Observer. So numerous are the causes which produce the incubation of

Insanity - so wholly and incompetent are the friends and relatives of the unfortunate Creatures who become thus afflicted to determine that Cause.

That through this incompetency of observation and judgement 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 oftener through a want of a proper appreciation of the advantages to accrue to the Physician in his treatment from a true knowledge of this Cause, through a pride 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 predisposition, to the Malady. The exciting or developing Cause is just 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 I dare not retain no good; but sadly retards the recovery of the afflicted; and I bars them perhaps of the benefit of a course of treatment which probably otherwise they would receive.

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From such and many other minor and greater evils does the difficulty in assigning the origin of the various types of Insanity arise.

With these inseparable embarrassments attendant upon the disease, which arise from the working of our too busy & vain - Physicians & Philosophers have long sought to arrive at their ultimate cause with but partial success.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, and yet those of greater magnitude, arising therefrom with respect to the Classification of Mental Maladies, Nosologists - have with great propriety gathered all the types under two general headings, or divided them into two great divisions - Those arising from Moral, and those from Physical Causes. Among <sup>the</sup> eminent men, some slightly tinctured with Materialism cleave to the opinion, that in all, post-Modem, examinations of the Insane; Physical Causes are discernible. Lawrence affirms that in the Examination

of the Heads of many Insane, hardly one was  
to be seen, that did not afford obvious  
marks of Disease. The celebrated Morgagni  
and others of distinction are of like opinion,  
On the contrary, Pinel, a man renowned  
for his Anatomical investigations, affirms  
that he never saw in the Cavity of the  
Skull of the Dead Insane, other appearances  
or lesions, than are observable in  
those of persons who have died of  
apoplexy - Epilepsy - nervous fever - Con-  
-vulsions - &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 since  
there exist such a wonderful acute  
and vivid sympathy of the Brain 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 vitiated condition of some  
other organ -

Hence the difficulty in ascertaining Insanity  
generally a primary or secondary affection.  
Physical Causes act aliter upon the Brain  
and Abdominal System, Compressions &  
Concussion of the Brain will occasion  
nausea vomiting and hepatic affections,  
And the presence of Worms in the Intestines  
will excite Convulsions & Epilepsy.  
Moral Causes may also act directly  
or indirectly upon the Brain and  
Sympathizing parts. Violent Emotions  
produce immediate and evident effects  
upon the digestive apparatus, which  
may ~~act~~ in turn act by their Sympathetic  
Connection upon the Brain and mind,  
Although that Connection be not yet  
definitely or conclusively established.  
But that mental emotions whether  
producing any perceptible alteration  
in the physical Condition of the Indi-  
-vidual or not, do engender 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 & America, whilst the Opinion does not obtain with respect to France. According to Lee, a large proportion of the admissions into pauper Lunatic Asylums arise from this Cause, most especially is it the case in large Manufacturing Towns & Districts, Dr. Woodward is clearly of the Opinion that many Cases arranged under ill Health fear of poverty - loss of property - domestic afflictions - religious excitement - &c. would more properly fall under this head.

Pritchard 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 - undiminished the  
 judgement - pervert the moral sense -  
 and induce disease in important organs,  
 as the brain & liver, which indirectly lead  
 to mental unsoundness, this is a fact  
 too well established to need any argu-  
 ment, at our hands. Yet on the contrary  
 it is contended that in Mania-a-factu,  
 it is not the Spirit Brands, nor the  
 effects upon the System, that produces  
 Insanity - but the remorse, the compunction -  
 the humiliation, even the despair, that  
 ensues, which producing such, won-  
 derous workings in the mind, destroys  
 its equilibrium, & mania - Mono-Mania -  
 and various forms of demented supineness.  
 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 -  
 remarked that loss of property or -

- adversity of affairs are almost invariably precursors to mental aberration.

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 drink 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 <sup>a</sup> majority of patients in Asylums in America, are those of very limited education, yet I can but suggest here, that a majority of these, are persons of more than ordinarily developed passions, probably owing chiefly to their want of education - mostly wayward dispositions, in their youth, & mostly of an ~~imagination~~ <sup>imagination</sup> 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 grandeur and sublimity of whose scenery, is admirably calculated to engender reflection and affording food and vigour to the imagination, is pleasantly adapted to develop in certain temperaments, gloom. Suspensiveness and Melancholy. I do not mean to be understood that all who are attacked with Melancholy 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 the tamer functions of their understanding in its excitement, those most susceptible to Daintiness and Fatigue, are much the more readily affected.

This assertion in all probability may be true to some extent, although there are few persons, whose vocation in life, demands preeminent exercise of the thinking faculties, that are inmates of Lunatic Asylums. Mental emotions - Constitution - Climate - diet - hereditary predisposition - Education - religious excitement - &c are enumerated as Causes of Insanity.

It would be impossible in this paper, to consider each of the many Agents, supposed to cause aberration 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 Africa, when he says Insanity is a Chronic disease of the Brain, producing, either a derangement of the intellectual faculties

Or prolonged Change of feelings - Affections -  
 and Habits, of the individual - Or probably  
 yet more appropriately in these terms -  
 in general it is regarded as a disorder of  
 the System, by which the sound & healthy  
 Exercise of the mental faculties is impeded  
 and disturbed -

The multiplicity of Causes of Insanity  
 precludes the Possibility of the Consideration  
 of each ~~of the many~~ 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 promotes or engenders  
 nervous action, both predisposes and  
 directly excites aberration of mind.

Many of the Causes affecting nervous  
 energy promoting Congestions on the Brain  
 engenders disease of other vital organs  
 and the functions of the Brain Sympathetically or

Thus in the insipient Onemist we always perceive - memory, that most noble attribute of man, daily to wear away & sense of the happy days of his boyhood, flit - transcendently athead his fading remem-  
 -berance - And saddened at discovering his own uncessing imbecility - he shrinks within himself, like the tortois he hides his head, ashamed of the gaze of his fellowman, he looks you 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 weak and wear-  
 -dering. The inferien lid assumes a leaden purplish hue. His muscles become relaxed and flabby - nervous and excitable to the highest degree, he neither seeks nor finds pleasure in his old associates, but in seclusion wears away his life - a prey to his hideous overawing imaginings.

How appalling the reflections - how humili-  
 -ating - disgusting - loathsome such indulgence.  
 An evil of such magnitude is it - increasing  
 too daily as it does, with the luxury and ease  
 of our enervated youth, that it earnestly  
 demands the vigilant scrutiny of parents  
 and those who have the tutoring of the young.  
 So wasting, 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 - Leucorrhoea - displacement of the  
 Uterus - difficult - Suppressed, or profuse,  
 menstruation - Hysteria - Cataplexy - Vertigo - &  
 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, blistering the parts will only succeed for a short time. Antiphrodisiacs act only partially and have to be continued so long, that they become injurious. It is worthy of note, that in my experience, which however is very limited, I have ever found the invariable habit of the Epileptic. In all such cases if not the remote Cause probably the exciting, or at least, it is a constant aggravator of the Malady.

How often unknown and unsuspected does the secluded Student, in the midst of his exertions, in the strife for those honors that elevate and ennoble his mind, add moral worth to his 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 mean and unseamly fracture.

Could all the horrors of the mad house arise suddenly up to his imagination-

- Daily becoming more and more diseased with what loathing would he turn from his depravity, and seek in refined Society - a balm for his self secluded, self acquired and self destroying habit.

The type that Insanity proceeds from a vice, that whilst it prostrates the physical powers - impairs the intellect - debases the Moral propensities, and altogether and wholly degrades the Creature in the Scale of Humanity, generally assumed, is that either of Melancholia, Mono-Mania - or that form of dementia verging to imbecility.

I am inclined to believe that whilst a very fair per centum of Cures are obtained in Insanity, much would the tables be augmented were it not for the Indulgence given by Patients to this very bad practice.

The treatment generally pursued, is attention to the general health - bathing - Moral discussion &c. This, occasionally, is productive of the most happy results, particularly in such cases as have minds <sup>insufficient</sup> to appreciate their Condition.

Hennip. H. Bethol