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Jaundice.

In order to treat a disease rationally we must first acquire a knowledge of its pathology; & usually, this knowledge is best obtained by examination after death, but idiopathic jaundice is so seldom fatal that physicians have been deprived of the advantages of post-mortem investigation in studying its pathology, & have been compelled to look to the symptoms & results of treatment for information respecting the true nature of the disease, But, fortunately, our knowledge of the action of remedies, & the indications they are capable of fulfilling in the economy, will often enable us to arrive at tolerably correct conclusions as to the character of the existing lesion or disorder, without the benefits of dissection & in no

disease, perhaps, has this means
pointed out a more successful
course of treatment than in jaundice.
This course, however, is not pre-
cisely uniform, but as in all
other diseases is influenced by
the symptoms, & the symptoms of
course vary with the circumstances
attending each particular case,
The symptoms of jaundice are too
well known to require repetition in
this place, & in the following re-
marks I shall advert to such of
them only as may best subserve
the object of this article - that,
namely, of determining the pathology
& by consequence, the treatment of
the disease -

Before proceeding to detail the
treatment, then, it will be necessa-
ry - in order that my views may not
appear empirical, first, to state as

concisely as possible, what I conceive
to be the true pathology of the disease,
& afterwards to consider the indications
of cure deducible therefrom, & the
mode of fulfilling them;
I am aware that authors recognize
an "excess of the coloring matter of
the bile, in the blood" as the true
pathological condition in jaundice,
but this view, if not erroneous, is
certainly incomplete - it fails to sat-
isfy the investigating mind of the
rational inquirer - is calculated
to mislead the unwary - & when
the young tyro who has derived his
information solely from theorists &
systematic writers, comes in contact
with the disease as it occurs in
practice, he will learn from sad
experience, the fallacy of their teach-
ings - Are we, then, to accept the sim-
ple statement of a fact as the explana-

-tion of all the phenomena observed
in this disease, or should we not
rather look beyond a mere result,
to the fountain-head of the mischief?
We are not to regard the existence
of an excess of biliary coloring mat-
ter in the blood, as the lesion in
jaundice, but, if we would acquire
a knowledge of the disease, which
shall serve us in practice, we
must endeavor to ascertain the
sources of this superabundance,
Thence, the real seat of the morbid
action -

The sources from which the
symptoms of jaundice may arise
are three - viz: - 1st Excessive
production; 2nd Absorption; & 3rd
deficient elimination, of the coloring
matter of the bile -

1st Excessive production,
as in many cases of bilious fever,

Cholera, diarrhoea, &c, we have, while the matters ejected from the stomach & bowels are highly charged with bile, a jaundiced hue of the skin, urine, &c, so, we may have jaundice occurring as an original affection, with bilious stools - but this is comparatively an infrequent phase of the disease - the stools in jaundice usually showing either a total absence, or decided deficiency of the biliary coloring matter - & of course, of the principles usually associated with it - when due to excessive production, the symptoms are said to be less persisting than when they arise in other conditions - e. g., - when due to deficient elimination -

2nd Absorption.

owing to the frequent obstructions

supposed to occur in the biliary passages, most authors have referred the symptoms of jaundice to absorption of the retained bile as the chief, if not exclusive source of the complaint. but the hypothesis upon which this explanation is founded, however plausible it may appear at first sight, is in my estimation, wholly insufficient for the end proposed, & those who advance it, instead of explaining the phenomena of a disease upon sound & rational principles, do but bend the symptoms & vary the circumstances, to accommodate a specious theory, the creature of their fancy. although it may be possible for the coloring matter of the bile, once separated from the blood, & now arrested in its exit, by absorption to enter the circulation again & thereby give rise to the symptoms of

jaundice, yet, in by far the greater
number of cases complicated by ob-
struction, the symptoms result, not from
absorption, yet, as a secondary consequence
of the obstruction; the agency of the
latter being excited through the
pressure of the accumulated bile
upon the acini of the Liver, sup-
pressing, or suspending the function
of the organ & thus preventing the
elimination of the coloring principle
from the circulation - for I believe,
with some of the French & other
authors, that the coloring principle
of the bile pre-exists as such, in
the blood - the fact being proved by
the experiments of Lassaigne, es-
pecially, who succeeded in separating
that principle from healthy blood.
The analyses of other experimenters
also, as given by Kruken & Paget,
with some facts contained in Dr.

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Budd's work on the diseases of the

Liver. clearly confirms the opinion,

But, how is the theory of absorption sustained by analogy? - Do we find in secreting tissues generally, a disposition to absorb the fluids Nature has formed them to elaborate? Or a like tendency in the surfaces of excretory passages to take up the matters they are intended to carry out of the System? What is the source of the sebaceous & other encysted tumors the Surgeon is so often called to encounter? Do they not result from the retention & nonabsorption of the proper secretions of the glands & follicles in which they occur? Why, if secreted matters are taken up again by the structures concerned in their production or evacuation, are tumors so frequently

developed in such situations? -

Again; what physiologists will
compromise his reputation by
declaring that urine is ever
absorbed from the surfaces with
which Nature has placed it in
contact? - or that in retention of
the urine, this fluid is taken up,
either from the pelvis of the Kidney,
the ureter, or the bladder? - I am
aware that Carpenter (p. 385) & others
have cited instances in which,
as a consequence of partial ob-
struction of the ureter, the se-
cretion of the Kidney ~~appears~~ to
have been re-absorbed, but if
we examine these cases care-
fully I think we shall find that
the absorption was only apparent.
Does the episteme of a paper abund-
ance of the principles of the urina
in the blood, under such circumstances,

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& their elimination by other organs,
from that these principles must have
passed out of the system through
the kidneys, & into the circulation
again by absorption? Or does it
only prove that, owing to the em-
barrassment the secretory functions
of these organs suffers from the
pressure of the accumulated fluid,
the urine is prevented escaping by
the ordinary outlet in sufficient
quantity, & discharged vicariously
through the skin & other organs? -
The cases mentioned by the same
authority, in which the urinary
apparatus was imperfectly devel-
oped, or having been developed, & the
Kidneys ~~xxxx~~ afterwards atrophied, cer-
tainly prove that the principles of the
renal secretion may accumulate in
the blood, & be discharged independently
of those organs, without the necessity

of a previous separation from &
re-absorption into, the circulating
fluid - So that, from analogy, we
are forced to the conclusion, that
the onerous task imposed by
authors, upon the absorbents in
jaundice, is in almost every in-
stance, entirely gratuitous - & that
the coloring matter of the bile, as has
been shown to be the case with
the principles of the serum, may
accumulate in the blood independ-
ently of their agency - The results of
treatment, also, lead us to the same
conclusion - The means best cal-
culated to overcome the disease,
being such as act upon the hepatic
function either directly, or indirectly
by removing from impediments to
the process of secretion in the organ,
As to the idea advanced by some,
that the bile may pass into the

blood again by a kind of retrograde movement, or reverse action of the Secreting Cells of the Liver, we might with equal plausibility imagine that in venous obstructions, the blood would re-percolate, not only through the valves of these vessels, but through the Capillaries themselves,

— But I regard this assumption as unworthy of further notice, & now to the consideration of the third & last Power — viz:—

3rd— Deficient elimination,

From what has been stated under the preceding head it will be evident that we regard the symptoms of jaundice as due, in the great majority of cases, to deficient elimination, or a failure on the part of the Liver to perform its appropriate function, that namely, of separating the bile

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from the blood, this deficiency of
action being due to torpor, or
functional disturbance of the
Liver from causes which may,
or may not, be appreciable -

Among the known causes that
may operate to impair the action
of the organ, may be mentioned,
as already intimated, obstructions,
whether from biliary calculi or
simple spasm of the ducts - the
presence of the accumulated bile
acting in these cases, as explained
elsewhere, so as to suspend the
hepatic function - But from
my limited observation & that
of those upon whom I can rely,
as well as from published accounts
of the disease, I believe that a cure
can never in ten of jaundice be
attended by obstruction - otherwise,
how is it that we so seldom have

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The violent pain characteristic
of Spasm & Calculous obstructions?
Or why do we so uniformly
observe, instead of febrile excite-
ment, a decided depression
of the vital powers? A more
fruitful source of the disease
however, is to be found in the
Congestion, either active or passive,
the result of the active, if may be,
of Malarial poison, or other
morbidic agent - which so fre-
quently occurs in the Liver &
portal circle generally. The
manner in which these sanguin-
ous engorgements operate in the
production of the disease, will
be apparent at once - In active
Congestion, the Liver is flooded
with blood, its function is over-
whelmed in the general excitement
& the secretion of bile, of course,

very seriously interfered with, -
 hence, we have the symptoms
 of jaundice developed, - In
 passive congestion, as will be
 readily understood, a similar
 state of things obtains, & with
 the same ultimate results -
 Hence we see that, in almost
 every instance of the disease,
 if we have not tubes of the
 Liver in the beginning, all the
 active agencies concerned in
 the production of the disease
 seem to exert their influence
 upon the hepatic function
 directly, or otherwise, so as to
 bring about that condition,
 & render the organ unable
 to throw off from the circulating
 mass, the excess of biliary
 coloring matter, upon which
 the characteristic symptoms

of the disease depends. what
course of treatment, then, would
these facts point out.² This
will appear under the next
head, that, namely, of the
Treatment.

The main indication deducible from the foregoing consideration of the nature of jaundice, is, to promote the normal action of the Liver, Kidneys, &c, - thus removing the excess of biliary coloring matter from the circulation, & preventing its accumulation - In ordinary, uncomplicated cases of the disease, this indication is best fulfilled by the use of emetic doses of Ipecacuanha, rendered stimulating by the addition of Sanguiaria - repeated daily for several days -

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& follows, should they fail
to arouse the hepatic func-
tion sufficiently, by some one
of the mercurials in alterative
dose, & saline cathartics, to
stimulate the Liver, remove
Congestion, & depurate the
System - The alkaline Carbo-
nates & Spirit of Nitric Ether
to enhance the action of
the Kidneys - Wild Cherry bark
to restore tone to the Stomach,
with such minor appliances
as may promote the Comfort
of the patient - When, from
idiosyncrasy, or other cause,
Mercury cannot be used, Nitro-
muriatic acid affords a very
good substitute - & may be
used endermically in Con-
junction with the mercurial
with advantage - Taraxacum,

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∇ alone, combined with soap, may also be used, but are inferior to the other remedies mentioned -

When active congestion of the Liver exists, the disease is to be treated as a commencing phlegmæia of the organ, ∇ Spasm ∇ Calculous obstruction of the ducts, are to be overcome by the means, calculated to relieve those conditions - such as anodynes, the warm bath, bleeding &c - ∇ The case treated subsequently, as one of simple jaundice, provided the symptoms persist after the removal of the obstruction -

This I have attempted, as briefly as possible, to set forth my views touching the nature

and treatment of jaundies;

And in submitting them to the scrutiny of the learned body whose duty it is to take cognisance of them, acknowledge my diffidence, & wish the noble institution, with which I am proud to have identified my interests as a student of medical science, that eminent degree of prosperity & success, to which you merit so justly entitled it.