

On the value of medicines as  
remedies in the treatment of insanity

Having of late years devoted  
considerable attention to insanity,  
I have selected its remedial treat-  
-ment (principally in as far as medi-  
-cines are concerned) as the subject of  
the following thesis, it not being  
my intention to enter minutely upon  
the various divisions of insanity, as  
the following classification, <sup>employed</sup> ~~adopted~~  
by the Commissioners in Lunacy is  
now generally adopted through the  
Country -

## Classification

### I Mania

- 1 Acute mania, or raving madness
- 2 Ordinary mania, or chronic so

2) being less acute -

3 Periodical mania or remittent mania  
with comparatively lucid intervals.

II Dementia or decay and obliteration  
of the intellectual faculties.

III Melancholia

IV Monomania

V Moral Insanity

} Partial Insanity

VI Congenital Idiocy

VII Congenital Imbecility

VIII General Paralysis of the Insane,  
Epilepsy, Delirium tremens

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For practical purposes it is most  
important to divide cases of insanity  
into acute and chronic, the  
acute being most frequently

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seen in general practice, while the chronic are more usually received into the Asylums, and come under the notice of those who specially treat the diseases now under consideration.

In acute cases it is universally admitted that therapeutic agents are of the greatest value, and that the more recent the attack the greater is the probability of a cure, but I shall endeavour to show that even in chronic cases much may be done by remedial agents to remove delusion, to allay excitement, and to procure sleep.

It cannot be doubted that while medicinal agents have been over-estimated by some, they have been greatly undervalued by others, and

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and I account for this to a certain extent, from the fact of a great number of proprietors of Lunatic Asylums not having been professionally educated. They may be as they often are, highly respectable, <sup>as to general intelligence</sup> but still they are too apt to depend ~~to~~ solely upon moral means, they do not look upon disease with a medical eye, and consequently neither know when or how to administer therapeutic agents.

The insane patients brought under my notice are very seldom in good health, the secretions are generally ~~affected~~ <sup>disordered</sup> often most offensive, this applying to the perspiration, the urine, and the evacuations, the mucous membrane indeed often

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appears to be specially affected.  
There is not infrequently a dry state of the eyes, nose, and mouth with heat, dryness and tension in the throat; the skin is either dry and harsh, or moist and relaxed; the damp hand being particularly observed in some low cases; and I am here induced to mention these deviations from a healthy state to show the necessity of their obtaining strict attention, for the very first questions put by the medical man to his patient have reference to the state of the secretions; therefore why should we, in treating either acute or chronic cases of Insanity deviate from so important a rule?

In my own experience I find  
purgatives to be of the greatest value

6 They act upon an extensive membrane,  
and very much relieve congestion of  
the brain, so often found in Insanity;  
and diaphoretics, diuretics and sometimes  
emetics are useful, such remedies  
tending in fact to restore the  
disordered functions to more natural  
actions.

In acute cases, general bleeding may be  
occasionally though rarely required,  
and even then only in small quantity,  
more for the purpose of relieving con-  
gestion than to produce depression;

of course I am not now speaking  
of a genuine case of Phrenitis,  
which must be treated antiphlogis-  
tically. - Leeching the temples

and cupping the nape of the neck are often needed, and

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are more generally useful than Venesection  
A succession of leeches is required  
when there is much action, and as  
is well known produces a very quieting  
and composing effect; in second  
attacks I have often found a few  
leeches to the temples most beneficial.

Tartar emetic is another powerful  
means of checking arterial action  
in acute cases; it is very manageable,  
produces, <sup>remarkably</sup> ~~very~~ uniform effects, and  
does not cause the permanent prostra-  
-tion so often seen when general  
bleeding has been employed. Many  
patients become rational under its  
effect; ~~with~~ the excitement and  
delusions returning <sup>when it is withheld;</sup> in minute doses  
it not only quiets arterial action  
but also produces moisture of the skin,  
and this perspiratory effort is often of

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the greatest relief to the patient. Tartar  
- emetic when combined with morphia  
is often very valuable, and I consider  
that the extraordinary effect produced  
by their combination depends on their  
diminishing arterial action in frequency  
and power, as well as their calming and  
as it were benumbing excessive nervous  
irritation. This leads me to notice the plan  
of treating many cases of Insanity, both  
acute and chronic by means of narcotics  
and sedatives, and I shall endeavour  
as briefly as possible to touch upon this  
subject - It is not only in *Vigilantia*  
that these narcotics and quiescents are  
useful, but wherever there is increased  
arterial excitement caused by increased  
nervous irritability.

The most recent writer upon this subject\*

On the Sedative Treatment in the prevention  
and cure of Insanity. Second edition by Joseph Williams.

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has detailed several cases shewing the  
importance of giving Morphina with or  
without Antimony or digitalis, every four  
or six hours, and he appears to consider  
that it is the systematic exhibition <sup>of the remedy</sup> which  
is so useful; Morphina was used in primary  
and secondary, and also in acute cases,  
as well as in some which had been of  
six and eight weeks duration. He observed  
"the delusion" vanish even after two or  
three doses, and again recur when the  
Morphina was omitted; he recommends  
small and repeated doses during the day,  
to be increased at bed-time. Speaking of  
the theory of this action while treating  
on the specific effect of digitalis he  
says, page 293; "When exhibited with  
caution, digitalis will be found most  
useful in reducing the number of the  
pulse, both in cases of irritation,  
and

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more particularly of inflammation of the  
brain; in cases of inflammation generally,  
how effective is it; how valuable to be  
able to reduce the pulse in number and  
in power; instead of the inflamed and  
irritated organ or surface receiving its  
supply of blood with impetuous and  
forcible frequency, 120 times, per chance  
each minute, we here possess the  
means of diminishing it numerically  
and of reducing its power. Let  
it not be thought I advocate its agency  
exclusively or alone; but even exhibited  
by itself it possesses this power, and when  
combined with antimony, and Opium becomes  
doubly efficacious" and when speaking  
of the action of narcotics generally, he  
says, page 173 "It is well known that  
during sleep the heart's action is dimin-  
ished, and thus the brain becomes

less stimulated owing to its supply of blood not being so forcibly or so frequently propelled through it, but this is only one of the advantages in procuring sleep; for when vigilance occurs, not only is the pulse more irritable and more frequent, but the nervous system itself, from prolonged and active thinking and outworn attention, becomes deranged, thereby doubly aggravating the mischief, thus being increased arterial action, with nervous irritation, and these again mutually acting and reacting on each other; so that the hypnotic not only quiets arterial action, but also diminishes nervous irritation."

This appears to be the point, the calming irritation, the diminishing arterial action, while in acute sthenic cases a more

or less powerful antiphlogistic treatment is required, yet when there is want of power, the soothing and tonic treatment will be the more useful - From my own experience I am induced to place more confidence in the *Liq. Spii Sedatorius* than in the preparations of Morphia so strongly recommended by various writers on insanity -

In chronic cases I depend more on smaller and more continued doses, in some cases giving alteratives, in others chalybeates and tonics, procuring sleep when necessary by opium, Morphia, or digitalis, or by the warm, tepid, or foot bath -

Whenever the head is hot it must be kept cool by ice or by <sup>other</sup> cold applications, however that the temperature ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> never depressed <sup>too</sup> much taking care.

or the cold too long continued.

Counter irritants I have found very useful both in acute and some chronic cases, and I either order Mustard poultices to the nape of the neck, or in more severe cases a blister. Where there was constipation arising from want of power and tone I have made trial of Strychnia with success.

But in two cases I found, that although it caused a daily action on the bowels, yet curious enough, it produced incontinence of urine. On withdrawing the Strychnia the constipation returned, and the urine was properly retained, but when the Strychnia was again given, the Patients again suffered from incontinence, and these results occurred repeatedly.

This reminds me that the secretion

from the kidney's demands the  
 minutest investigation; I have before  
 noticed how offensive it often is in  
 cases of Insanity, and it is to its  
 proper and healthy elimination  
 that our remedies must often  
 be chiefly directed, and for this  
 purpose, alteratives, diuretics, aper-  
 -cents, alkalis and acids may  
 each prove specially useful -

Organic chemistry is being revolut-  
 -ionized, and the day is probably  
 not far distant when the secretions  
 will be found to afford more  
 unerring tests of particular morbid  
 changes than we can at present  
 derive from them.

I have now endeavoured to state the  
 result of my experience with regard  
 to the necessity of employing medicinal  
 agents in the cure of Insanity -

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In practice I have occasionally found it im-  
- possible to administer such remedies in the  
usual manner, the patient obstinately refus-  
- ing to take any medicine whatever. In  
such cases, I endeavour to effect the  
desired object by means of the enemata,  
in which way opium, purgatives, turpentine  
and other agents may be thrown into the  
system, and occasionally I have applied  
Morphia, antimony, and Belladonna  
by the endermic method.

In Italy and France medicinal baths  
are used, there is always some difficulty  
attending their employment, and I believe  
fatal accidents have occasionally  
resulted, but I have no personal ex-  
-perience of their use.

To sum up I believe the following to be the proper  
way of treating such cases as those under  
consideration; When inflammatory action

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excite combat it by antiphlogistic measures;  
where there is excessive irritability remove it  
by sedatives; where there is restlessness  
and vigilance narcotics and the warm  
or tepid bath will often be successful in  
procuring sleep; where the secretions are  
disordered they must be duly regulated  
and improved by alteratives, by aperients,  
by diuretics, or by diaphoretics, as each may  
be more specially indicated; where there  
is want of power, this must be supplied  
by tonics, by stimulants, by a good nutritive  
- 100 diet, taking great care to afford  
pure air, and a proper proportion of  
exercise, sufficient to slightly fatigue,  
but not to cause actual exhaustion.  
When the presence of these produces  
excitement, irritation, or delusion, a  
Temporary or more protracted seclusion

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is to be advised; These remedial  
measures with cheerful occupation  
and a mild conciliatory, and  
yet firm moral discipline  
Constitute as I believe the rational  
plan of treating cases of Insanity.

Wm. Horstburg

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