of the fluid itself, or in the nervous influence regulating its distribution, might cause a general exhalation of blood into the various tissues of the lungs, more especially if (as is not improbable) a previous tendency to diminished coagulability had rendered its extravasation comparatively easy.

In intimate connexion with this subject of the dilatation of the blood, I may mention that, since the preceding remarks were written, I have had my attention directed to the fourth chapter of Dr. Cormack's *Prize Thesis on Air in the Organs of Circulation* (Edin. 1837), entitled "Remarks upon the Generation of Air in the Living Body, especially in the Blood-Vessels; with observations on the consequences which may result from its presence there". He shows that "there are various facts and arguments, which render it exceedingly probable that, owing to the sudden formation of air within the blood-vessels, death may be produced either by arresting the contractions of the right side of the heart, or by producing a fatal action on the brain."

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ON SOME DIFFICULTIES IN THE STUDY OF HYSTERIA.

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THE Benevolent Power presiding over universal nature, has determined that, for the most part, diseases dangerous to animal life should quickly attain a crisis, in the recovery or death of the sufferer. Of such diseases, whatever may be the theory of their treatment, the course is apparently settled, the reasoning upon them clear and simple, and the result, from its rapidity, in some measure satisfactory to the spectator. But there is another class, whose continued presence is quite compatible with animal being; and of these, as it is their property to remain without full destruction to the organs they disturb, so is their progress unsatisfactory, and the means taken for their removal uncertain, conjectural, and obscure. In these, the physician provides himself from all sources, and from his personal experience (contracted as far as possible to obtain concentration), with certain types, or ideals of diseased states, from which he insensibly selects one, towards which the case before him appears most to approximate; for, in reality, he must rest satisfied with such an approach to truth, as an escape from the extremes of useless scepticism, and blind credulity. Hysteria may be placed among this class, as one of the most difficult; so much so, that a perfect treatise on hysteria would comprehend within itself the primal foundations on which the structure of medicine, as an art, must finally be raised. I say as an art, in opposition to its popular development as a practice, each requiring a different constitution of mind; to the perfection of the former, self-distrust being as conducive, as self-confidence is necessary to the latter. The modes and processes of the human intellect are not favourable to the exact study of this class of diseases. There is a tendency in our minds, by their levity and volatility, to overlook with ease all the many failures in dreams, charms, omens, and prophecies, but obstinately to remember the very few that are successful. Now the opposite state is required; we should have the capability of

recollecting, and a pleasure in dwelling with exactitude, on failures equally with successes. Nor can imposture cease, till the stimulus of praise or gain are unnecessary to an accurate remembrance.

Again, if in youth, by a too close attention to professional facts, those subjects on which the imagination, or an inferior faculty closely allied thereto, ought legitimately to be entertained, are totally shut out; if these professional discoveries too closely and too entirely occupy the student's mind, the imagination, deprived of its proper nutriment, is reverted on this state of practical life, and becoming thus diseased, and unguided by the beautiful, busies itself in working out and colouring medical cases, supplying, as the results of medicines and treatments, what exists only in a heated and disordered fancy. By the law of association, also, from constantly reading, and hearing that certain medicines produce certain symptoms in the progress of disease, we are accustomed in their use, with unshaken faith, to attach the cure to the remedy, destitute of the boldness to innovate, or of the irreverence which seems to be implied in doubting their efficacy. Our fears of words and names are too great, to allow us calmly to observe what would be the result of the total abstinence of our assistance. With us, coincidence and concurrence are allowed the weight of sequence. Even as students of the art of medicine, difficulties beset us, from which students in the other arts are free. For instance, in painting and sculpture, a habit of patient quietude, and concentration on single objects is encouraged, and a hurried walk round a gallery of pictures and sculpture would be considered confusing, rather than beneficial. In these arts, also, we consider the absence or presence of truth in the production, as the test of the degree of perfection in the artist. But man is naturally an animal believing in medicine; and nothing will wholly root out this instinctive proneness and declivity to believe, without proof, in the statements of cures. This is not more present, though more visibly so, in the medicine-men and charmers, than in the civilised and enlightened. It cannot be overlooked and contemned; for the painful fact must be acknowledged, that a love of such error is not accidental, but essential to our nature; and that in our progress toward medical truth, old open errors are too often exchanged for the newer and more recondite. Men, too, in their time of strength, and the even temperament of health, may neglect external forms; but, in their hour of weakness and depression, they cling to the visible and tangible—the form of something active, something being “done” for the patient, is called for by the superstition of the friends. To what other principle, than an instinctive knowledge of this working in minds under suspense, can be attributed the attempts to bleed drowned and crushed men, and others in a similar condition?

In the study and treatment of hysteria, we have all these difficulties to contend with; and these must excuse our want of permanent success. We can conceive hysteria to be a diseased mode of the will, which becomes inveterate from taking place in a disordered body, without its originating therein, or being wholly cured thereby. If it be considered a bodily disease alone, we should be forced to exclude the effects which a consciousness, or the being conscious of their corporeal existence, excites on the action of the nerves: for it will, I think, be granted, that there are few forms of hysteria, in which the

patient's attention is not fixed on some nervous receptacle, with too great a continuity and intenseness.

In some cases, hysteria appears to be the accumulation of unexhausted energies, of whatever kind; as if this spiritual or nervous accumulation became too great for its corporeal dwelling. When these energies find a proper vent, the hysteria disappears. Some impression made upon the heart or imagination, calling up a train of morbid sensations, continued without intermission, destroys the regular function of volition, and by over-exercise damages the bodily instrument of its operation.

It is curious to observe the mental character of the hysterical—the vacillating tone, and the halting between two opinions, which characterises the statement of their sufferings. Where there is actual disease, there is less delight in describing it; and the symptoms are comparatively clearly and succinctly related. With the complications of hysteria, the creations of fancy supersede the plain offspring of fact. A tendency to unsoundness in thought and expression, when only partial, and meeting with partial resistance in will, often takes the form of the hysteric paroxysm in those muscles over which the will predominates. Yet, when this resistance is wholly overcome, the tide of unconnected thought, feeling, and expression, sweeps on, and total incoherence is established.

A strong desire for the sympathy of those around, which is sometimes, unfortunately, to be obtained alone by the exhibition of the paroxysm, is one grand cause of its excitement. The attention of the hysterical is accidentally drawn to some other form of disease by proximity; and this in some gives rise to the artistic energy of imitation, without the wish to fraudulently simulate the disease. Women, with all their elegance and delicacy of perception, are not inventive, and rather work on what has been already presented, than originate even a new form of disease. Their want of self-consciousness, in many of their acts and feelings, has brought upon the hysterical the charge of active imposture; when, instead of this, they would be found defective in the power of placing their actions before their own eyes, and viewing them as the acts of strangers. The self-contemplating power of Hamlet and Macbeth, in opposition to the female characters of Shakspeare, will best explain this.

We cannot fail to observe that the hysteric paroxysm is restrained, and sometimes extinguished, in the moral atmosphere of women of clear understanding, as it is nourished by the weak sympathies of the reverse. With the same diet, air, exercise, and medicine, a patient will remain hysterical, with certain companions or attendants; and, under the same external circumstances, recover in the society of others; the want of attention to, and interest in, the exhibitions of the disease, being the only apparent difference. Old cases disappear under changes of scene, air, and passions, particularly the latter. Short walks, repeated at intervals, seem to break up and dissolve the morbid impressions, and gradually and insensibly increase the self-control, especially if these walks be taken in company with those of their own sex, of that temperament more likely to perceive the ludicrous than the tragic, in the common affairs of life.

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