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## Original Communications.

### GENERAL PARESIS.

An Extract from the Report on Medicine to the  
Canada Medical Association Meeting, held  
at Halifax, N. S., August 3rd, 1881.

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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN.—\* \* \* \* \*

Of late there are indications that the sphere of neuro-pathology is being so extended as to include many maladies that were considered beyond its bounds, and there is reason for it, because, either a neurotic tendency prevails much more than formerly, or it has been more carefully worked out. To me it appears that many diseases assume a neurotic character, much in the same way that, in malarial districts, malaria imposes itself on other forms of disease. Owing to more extended educational facilities, the restless energy that pervades all classes of society produces a tax on the nervous or mental part of our organization which our fathers did not experience. In the race for *wealth*, they were content to slowly and surely follow the well-known paths, and in the race for *fame*, they were satisfied if it came after their labors were accomplished. They had more of the *otium cum dignitate*, while performing a vast amount of work and original research; but it may be also said, they had fewer competitors than we of to-day. Bearing these things in mind, it is not to be wondered at if the nervous organization becomes more excitable, and modifies pathological indications by a neurotic tendency, or that we should have a

development of maladies similar to what are termed the neuroses.

There is one form of disease of the brain, first described by Esquirol, and more fully by Bayle, in 1822, which is becoming more and more prevalent, and invariably gravitates to the Hospital for Insane. It is rarely, if ever diagnosed by the ordinary medical attendant, unless as a case of disease classed under that very general term *insanity*; and I trust this will be my excuse for importing a specialty into a general discussion on medicine. I refer to the so-called *Paresis*, or *General Paralysis of the Insane*, names not only indefinite, but in their ordinary acceptance misleading.

This malady is unknown amongst savages, very rare in the colored races, and seldom attacks females. Its most common victims are men in the prime of life, who are engaged in some form of business, and very often the able, intelligent, and energetic. It is not, so far as known, hereditary, in this way differing from insanity in general which has heredity as a most common cause. Thus far a clear case of recovery is questionable, and it runs a rapid course of from one to four years.

If this *opprobrium medicine* is ever to be satisfactorily dealt with, it must be by members of the general profession, because with them alone is the probability of its detection at a stage, which may be so early as to admit of cure before the arachnitis and microscopic organic lesions of the brain and spinal cord have so far developed as to be intractable, a condition always assumed before the symptoms of mania and pronounced insanity present themselves; so far all these patients become insane