

## ON PARESIS.

Read before the Toronto Medical Association

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MR. VICE-PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—You will not have forgotten that at the close of our last meeting, when no response was made to the question from the chair, as to notice of papers for next meeting, I ventured to intimate, that as no other member seemed disposed to favour us with a contribution, I would myself endeavour to meet the requirement, by submitting a few observations on a peculiar form of cerebral disease, which I have long regarded as deserving of the serious consideration of our entire profession; for, unquestionably, whether regarded in relation to its *now* universally acknowledged fatality, to its morbid physical and mental accompaniments, or to the previous social status, and intellectual energy of no small proportion of its victims, it may well command, not only the studious observance of every intelligent medical practitioner, but also the humble reflection of every member of society.

Before, however, entering further on my subject, permit me to crave your kind indulgence towards those defects which I am convinced will be but too manifest to those of your numbers who have devoted much attention to the general subject of morbid psychology and its associate pathological conditions. My timidity in this relation is certainly not moderated by the gratification derived by me from the hearing of the excellent papers which have already been submitted to our society, characterised as they were by careful reflection and close reasoning. I assure you, gentlemen, that these contributions, supplemented as they have been, by the exhibition of instructive pathological specimens, placed before us by zealous workers, and by the free and valuable discussions which ensued, have been regarded by me, as I doubt not they have been by all, as favourable auguries of the future progress of our organization; and I would fondly trust that the good example given by our early benefactors, will not fail to act as a cogent stimulus on our entire membership. Let us hope that the little leaven will work its way through the whole lump, and that before our first year shall have passed, we shall be able to congratulate ourselves on a "*good rising*," rather than be constrained to

weep over sodden dough. The peculiar disease to which I now venture to invite your consideration, may truly be said to be one of only modern recognition, though it might be erroneous to suppose that its existence dates not far anterior to the period at which its characteristic mental and somatic phenomena first attracted discriminate observance. I believe the first French writer on insanity who distinctively treated of it, not yet half a century ago, was Esquirol; and the first English author who, reproducing Esquirol's description, introduced it to the notice of our countrymen, was Dr. Pritchard, whose excellent treatise on insanity was published about 42 years ago. The designation first given to the disease was that of "General Paralysis," a name which to my certain knowledge, has, in this country, and I doubt not, elsewhere, led to very numerous mistakes, or misapprehensions. The term *Paralysis* as generally understood in medicine, signifies either a total deprivation of muscular power, or of sensory function, or of both; or at least a very great diminution of these vital conditions. Now, unfortunately for accurate easy diagnosis of the disease in question, it so happens, that in the formative stage, when alone, exactitude might be of practical value, so far from any palpable deterioration of muscular energy, or of sensory integrity, being *palpable* to the inexperienced observer, the very contrary is almost invariably the fact. The budding subject of our so called *general Paralysis* is the very antithesis of a paralytic. He is all life, all energy, all self-assurance, all speculativeness, all fearlessness, and all hopefulness. He feels stronger, more healthful, more youthful, than he ever before felt. Day by day he asserts all this, and, (not strange to say), his family and friends, and not seldom his medical adviser, share in the delusion. Dozens<sup>s</sup> of such athletes have been sent to me, ticketed as most promising cases, and I doubt not such still continue to be sent to my successor, and to all his confreres.

Now, the disease under consideration is not one of obscure diagnosis, even in its earliest stage. It therefore appears to me very undesirable, that it should be designated by a name which is so well calculated to lead those who are unfamiliar with its conventional acceptation in the specialty of insanity, into error. This difficulty has, to a certain extent, been obviated by adoption of the enlarged term, "general Paralysis of the Insane," but for