Notes by Baker of symptoms of incipient senile dementia, and on case of delusional insanity, with an account of autopsy

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Notes of a Case of Delusional Insanity with an Account of the Autopsy. By Robert Butler M. D. Physician Superintendent of the Friends' Retreat near York.

The notes of the following case are placed before the profession in the belief that they report the history of a case of unusual interest.

G. A. S. aged 27. a Civil Engineer admitted into the Friends' Retreat York June 30th 1874. Patient is 5ft. 8in. in height. thin - pale & Cachectic. Head well formed: Expression somewhat vacant, unsettled. His insanity is stated to be of 3 months duration & the cause is said to be partial non-success in his profession. The chief delusion was that he was the victim of a conspiracy destined by his friends to prevent him obtaining work.

His mental condition is characterised by delusions of which the chief is that he is the rightful Prince of Wales. and the secondary is that there is a conspiracy

He will only answer questions when addressed in full as "His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales" he then commences his answer in the 3rd person by the same phrase. If any part of the title is omitted he will not reply. He has written proclamations setting forth his origin & pretensions and calling upon his loyal subjects to rise to arms in this cause the Queens defence. The possession of this delusion has

Completely alienated him from his relatives & friends (2
he is miserable, morose & sullen and complains of being
annoyed by the proximity of other persons. He eats
and sleeps well.

June 14th One of the patients lately ensconced on the form
where E. A. A. spends his time assuming proclamations — this
p. send E. A. A. that nothing any warning he struck
the intruder several severe blows with a bagatelle cue.

June 17th During last night he had his Blankets & Sheets
together into a cord 16 yards long fastening it to his
window-bar and leaving squeezed thro' the aperture
11½ by 7½ inches (the Rebate sash-squares being made of this
small size to prevent the likelihood of anyone escaping) let
himself down into the garden below: at the next visit of the
Night Attendant he was of course missed. I was immediately called
up and found him lying on a garden seat much exhausted
but not seriously injured.

August 1st E. A. A's condition is unimproved: he is sullen
& violent & often violent in behaviour & language. He gives
evidence of refusing to speak at other times to make complaints such as
his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has to complain of persons being

It appears however that the patient's mental condition from boyhood, has been unsatisfactory.

At school he lived apart from others, considered himself of higher social status than the rest of his schoolfellows and as a consequence was placed in Coventry by them.

During his apprenticeship on the Empress, his conduct was so irritating to the customers that they revenged themselves on him by docking him in a boat's pay.

Whilst employed on his passenger duties in India he was unpopular & constantly believing that he was neglected & not appreciated.

On his return from India to England, where he worked his own passage on the ship, he threatened against the captain & was placed in Irons.

put in his coffee.. He frequently now refuses food believing we are in a conspiracy to poison him & persists in his refusal until the apparatus for feeding is produced. He is constantly on the alert for an opportunity to escape he refuses to sit near the fire. Patients & has medical Since the 29th the constant supervision of a special Attendant.

Sept. 27. This Patient 6 days whilst out in the Asylum garden with his Attendant made a skilful attempt at escape - seizing a suitable moment he by a springing jump caught hold of the bough of a Walnut tree - ran along a branch - gained in safety the summit of the adjacent wall & from thence dropped into the adjoining field - where however another Attendant captured him.

Oct. 17th He is more backative repeats a made up speech in a sharp suitable tone during reference to his claim to be understood acknowledged the true Prince of Wales. 3 days for the first time he complained that the persons represented in the wall-pictures spoke to him & among other things said that "the Quakers were hastening onwards to their utter annihilation".

1875. May 1st The same Reid & Entries continue up to this date when at the 7 May 1st 1875

Each morning, a pint & a quarter of strong
beef tea, thickened with a decent sprinkle of
corn flour, with the addition of one egg.
In the afternoon, evening a pint & a quarter of milk
prepared in the same way -

is recorded that food had needed on that day to be forcibly administered.

Oct. 19th. This patient during the past 3 weeks has been more than usually savage, morose & violent, attacking all who come near him. On the morning of the 18th he silently (during the interval between the visits of the Night Attendant) succeeded in disjointing a portion of his Bedstead - barricaded his door and armed with a wooden bar defied anyone to enter his room. Through the fanlight over the door I directed the stream of water from a fire Extinguisher on to his face & so completely blinded him that his blood fell unheeded - gradually the door was opened, an attendant protected by thrusting his head covered with a Hair-mattress rushed in & with assistance secured the patient - without any accident resulting to anyone.

1876
Jan. 13th. Since the 6th inst. he has refused to take any food, & therefore has thrice daily been fed thro' the funnel & oesophagus tube. He has not spoken for two weeks - is very dirty passing urine and faeces in his Bed

April 26th Patient occasionally takes a Meal but mainly
requires the total administration of food
~~always~~ Every day

Oct. 5th Patient has not taken voluntarily any food
since ~~last~~ ~~entry~~ April 26th — he requires the forcible administration
of food three daily. He is not losing ground.

1877

Feby. 17th For past 4 days Patient has taken food
voluntarily & has been rallying & gd up. does himself.
— today he has again needed feeding by the tube
Oct. 15th Since Feby. 7th Patient has been forcibly fed three
daily: his bodily health is as good as usual. His mental
Condition is unchanged.

Oct. 22. Patient has become so actively violent & fighting furiously
& everyone who approaches him that it has been found needful
to place him in seclusion. Each time he hears the Medical
Officer coming to his room to feed him he gets out
of bed. stands in an advantageous position with his fists
doubled for action & when the door is opened fights actively
& desperately until overpowered by the 4 Attendants: he is then
held until food has been administered & then one by one the
Attendants leave the room, the last one frequently receiving a
parting blow from Esther the hand or foot of the Patient

No stimulants of any kind were administered after Oct. 1877, but half an ounce of cod liver oil was administered with the food, thrice daily.

× All attempts to subdue the patient's violence by means of medical treatment proved unavailing. Hypodermic injection of Hyoscyamine produced dilitation of the pupils, but had no effect in abating the patient's violence.

·X· owing to his persistent violence & exhausting attempts to injure others

× each time when he he fought with homicidal fury, difficult to realise, except by those who have witnessed it, × these

It is unnecessary for me to add any more Extracts from the Case Books. For ten years I much this patient was ~~[illegible]~~ artificially without intermission, fed thrice daily ~~artificially~~, maintaining fairly good health. From Octr 23rd 1817 to May 23. 1818 it was deemed necessary ~~[illegible]~~ to ~~[illegible]~~ ~~Exceptional~~ active restraint to keep him constantly in seclusion. At these times each day when fed he sought such a distance that needed to be seen to be appreciated, those whose duty it was to feed him. It is with a feeling of satisfaction & thankfulness that I can record that during this time he frequently assisted in injuring others he himself never sustained any injury.

On the 23rd of May. Mr Prichard, & Attendants removed him as usual along the Gallery to his Room to administer food to him. As usual on hearing no one he jumped out of Bed, stood behind the door in fighting

attitude — gave a subdued groan, became pale and collapsed — all fighting power vanished — the ~~was~~ laid back on his Bed — apparently dying. There was no struggling — no violence: collapse supervened whilst he was preparing to fight — ~~the cause of Death~~ Suddenly ~~found unusually obtuse~~. Dulness over the base of the right lung was at once detected, the respirations became inexpressibly rapid Embarrassed but ~~the~~ that no expectoration could be detected. Almost directly however a horrible sickening smell was emitted with the patients breath — this smell ~~to sickening~~ rapidly extended from the patients room along the whole length of the gallery & was such offensively neutralized I thought it must arise from Gangrene of a portion of the lung but the smell was markedly different from that usual in such cases. The patient lingered 15-3/4 hours & then died.

I The following Report of the Postmortem Examination of ~~the~~ ~~deceased~~ to Dr Prideaux.
has been drawn up by Dr P. the assist! Med! Officer.

In conclusion it seems to me that this case has been
1st That this Patient was in an advanced
an unusually interesting one.
condition of Delusional Insanity
kept alive in ~~a~~ fairly good bodily health for more
than 2 years by the forcible administration of food
2nd That the Cause of Death was unusual - the Effort of
placing himself in sitting attitude being supposed to
cause the rupture of the attenuated wall of the
abscess of the lung. + If the patient had died during
an active struggle with the Attendants & then had
been no Postmortem Examination how probable would it
have been that Plague would have been attributed to
the Hospital Authorities.

The Friends' Retreat,

near York.

This is very interesting in a Medical Point of view. But I think this Death is also especially interesting to those who have the care of the Insane

T. C

Incipient Senile Dementia

Memory weakened
judgment impaired
Express themselves confusedly
confusion of thought
perplexed Expression of face
Employs himself over brief space in purposeless manner for
picking leaves gardening imagining he doing
great service & earning large
sums of money then leaves it
for something else

Subject to periodical attacks of
Excitement

The outward signs of feebleness
Marked in the countenance