

## NERVOUS DELIRIUM, TREATED BY LAUDANUM INJECTIONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In the following case of *delirium nervosum*, I successfully adopted the treatment recommended (first, I believe) by Dupuytren, viz., tincture of opium injections. During the time that I was a student at Paris I witnessed several cases of a like nature, treated in the same manner, with the happiest effects. No doubt the powerful influence of the opium clyster upon the nervous system is in consequence of its not being previously subjected to the digestive powers of the stomach, thus being absorbed into the circulation in an unaltered state. I am, Sir, your very obedient and obliged servant,

A. B. MADDOCK, M.D.

80, Judd-street, Brunswick-square,  
September, 1839.

In the night of July 12th I was hastily summoned to attend A—e W—d, ætat. 25, of abstemious habits and nervous temperament. Her mother stated that she had that day quitted the service of Mrs. F., Devonshire-street, in consequence of having become *enceinte* by the footman. The fact of her shame being known, together with the loss of her situation, so much preyed upon the mind of the young woman that her senses quite deserted her. She presented, indeed, a sad spectacle of the misery which a deviation from virtue entails upon woman. The excitement was so great at the time I visited her, that it was with some difficulty she was prevented from laying violent hands upon herself. The head was cool, and there was a cold, clammy sweat upon the hands and feet; the pulse small and frequent; the pupils were contracted, but the eyes were not intolerant of light; the bowels not open to-day. From the history of the case, the delirium did not appear to me to be dependent upon any inflammatory action of the membranes or periphery of the encephalon, but a purely nervous affection; and I considered that *depletion*, which I have seen but too indiscriminately employed in delirium, was not here indicated; I therefore ordered the following mixture:—

*Castor oil*, one ounce; to be taken immediately.

*Muriate of morphia*, three grains;

*Syrup of poppies*, six drachms;

*Distilled water*, four ounces. Make a mixture, of which take a fourth part every four hours.

17. Continues very violent, and has been so the greater part of last night. The mixture was regularly given. The bowels have been freely relieved. The mixture to be continued.

18. Passed a bad night, and is almost unmanageable this morning; pulse very low and quick; the countenance much attenuated and altered since yesterday; appears worse in every respect. I now ordered fifteen drops of tincture of opium to be mixed with a little gruel, and administered every four hours, in the form of a clyster. In the evening she was more calm, and her mother (a particularly intelligent woman), said to me that she was sure great relief had been derived from the clyster; the bowels open; the clysters to be regularly continued.

18. Slept quietly, at intervals, during the night, and is sensible this morning; the pulse fuller, and the head and feet have regained their natural warmth; says that she feels "dreadfully exhausted," and complains of a great "bearing down" in her inside, and states that she is five months gone with child, and is afraid, from her feelings, that she is about to miscarry. Has evidently derived great benefit from the clysters, which, however, from her great improvement, I now discontinued. Prescribed as follows:—

*Battley's sed. sol. of opium*, eight drops;

*Syrup of poppies*, three drachms;

*Distilled water*, one ounce and a half.

Mix; make a draught, to be taken every four hours.

20. Called up this morning by her mother, who stated that she believed her daughter to be in labour. Before I arrived a still-born child had been delivered. The placenta still remained, but was shortly afterwards naturally expelled. She appeared extremely dejected, and expressed her sorrow by tears and exclamations, that she should have miscarried, and said that it would "drive her mad again." The sedative draughts, as before prescribed, to be regularly taken. Late at night an attendant came to say that she was more violent than ever. Ordered the opiate clysters to be immediately resorted to.

21. Was quite composed by the clysters last night, and is sensible this morning; complains of great irritability and weakness, but is in no pain; the pulse low and extremely weak. Ordered a little warm brandy and water, and the following:—

*Sesquicarb. of ammonia*, fifteen grains;

*Lemon juice*, one drachm;

*Syrup of oranges*, half a drachm;

*Tinct. of hyoscyamus*, one drachm;

*Water*, an ounce and a half. A draught, every six hours.

22. Quite tranquil; slept for four hours last night; the pulse fuller, and head and feet warm. The medicine to be continued.

23. No delirium; slept well last night, and feels much stronger. From this date no untoward symptoms arose, and she gradually regained her former health and strength.