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### Dissertation on diarrhoea

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at her's  
Mary S. Russell

Subject

Dear Son





By this term is designated those discharges from the bowels which are not dysenteric in their character. It is divided into the acute or simple form, and the chronic or that form met with in the army hospitals.

First of Diarrhoea as a whole. This is very often an attendant of disease. In the last stages of phthisis there is often a persistent diarrhoea. In Typhoid fever it is one of the very bad symptoms when it comes on in the latter stages. In the <sup>decline</sup> of the febrile exanthemata and malignant disease of the lower bowels diarrhoea constitutes one of the principal symptoms, and is one of the principal objects of treatment.

## First of Simple Diarrhoea

This may arise from a variety of causes or rather pathological conditions as the increased secretory action of the intestines.

any substance in the intestine which causes an irritation of the living membrane of the intestines which may cause a secretion of the glands of the membrane that will set in operation an active diarrhoea. The secretion of the abdominal viscera as the liver spleen &c may be so altered in character as to produce it.

Arising from so many different morbid conditions the symptoms are as different and various as their causes except the one mentioned in the definition. As relating to the discharge they may vary much in regard to the number



sometimes there being not more than two or three in a day and in some cases the patients will hardly arise from one stool before called to another. In quantity there is as great a difference as in number it being sometimes scarcely more than natural in others the quantity has amounted to thirty or even forty pounds in a day.

Generally there is pain before the discharge of a griping nature which <sup>which</sup> hurries the patient to the stool ~~and~~ <sup>is</sup> generally moderated after a passage from the bowels although in some cases the pain continues throughout the entire time.

Following the discharge there is a feeling of exhaustion or sinking with the sensation of fainting cool skin feeble irregular pulse which however soon passes off

It is sometimes attended with fever which is an indication of inflammation of the serous membrane of the intestine. In however the majority of the cases there is no fever, the skin dry and urine scanty.

As regard to the duration of the disease there is every variety it usually can be checked in a few days but sometimes it continues in spite of every means used to check it when it takes on the chronic form of which we shall speak here after.

Death from the simple form seldom occurs but when it does it comes on from the prostration of resulting from the enormous discharge which occurs in some cases.

14. Diarrhoea from increased peristaltic action of the intestines

The looseness of the bowels which is the result of fright or any other strong mental emotion is from this cause the same may be said of it as the result of the hysterical or other nervous affections. The copious diarrhoea of great eaters to which the exciting cause of the increased action is the over distention of the bowels which is felt as a direct stimulant to the increased action.

In these cases the discharges are of a semi-fluid consistency of a fecal odor and a natural color.

2d Diarrhoea from irritation of the mucous membrane of the intestine.

This is by far the most frequent source of this complaint and it is sometimes difficult to decide between this and inflammation of the bowels. (Enteritis) as they run into



each other and there is a shaking  
off of each so that it is hard to point  
out the dividing line.

Diarrhoea of irritation may arise in  
two ways, it may be from  
irritation independent of any other  
disorder of the system. ~~or~~  
or it may be produced by some  
diseased state of some other organ.

The most common cause of irritation  
acting directly on the membrane  
are the eating of ~~some~~ improper  
food, insufficient mastication,  
acid or saccharine fruits more especially  
those which are ~~unsuited~~ <sup>or used</sup>  
in excess, ~~moist~~ or corrupt <sup>food</sup> such  
as is sometimes used in the  
army or on ship board. Spoiled  
liquors, sweet cider, worms or accumulation  
of fecal matter in the intestines.  
particular kinds of food produce  
in some persons the same effect.



all of these have the effect of a direct irritation to the mucous membrane of the intestine without having any connection with any other part of the system.

Of causes that act through the system cold is the most productive of disease particularly when it follows a high degree of heat for this reason it is most prevalent in the autumn when the heat of the ~~summer~~ day is followed by the chill of the night.

It may <sup>occur from</sup> the change of inflammation or gout from some other part of the body to the bowels. The retrocession of some of the cutaneous diseases or the suppression of some of the habitual discharges may set in operation a very active diarrhoea.

In Diarrhoea from irritation the discharges are of a natural consistency

and color sometimes streaked with green from an altered state of the biliary secretions and sometimes the discharge is impregnated with blood from some ulceration where the inflammation has proceeded to that. Sometimes the discharge is large and watery and then it is termed serous diarrhoea in others the discharge is of mucus when it is termed mucus diarrhoea

Some of the diseases of the liver are most apt to produce it by the action of the diseased bile of the membrane of the intestines.

### Treatment

We now come to the treatment of the simple form this in most cases is quite simple the disease yielding with very little difficulty

In the first form (28) from increased  
peristaltic action of intestines the  
indications are to check the increased  
action this is readily accomplished by  
from ten to twenty grs of Tric. Spirit  
or ʒi of the Camphorated Tric. Spirit.

In that form which is the result  
of an over distention of the intestines  
with food the bowels should be  
relieved by some gentle laxative  
as a dose of castor oil and the  
intestines relieved of the distention  
the diarrhoea generally ceases with  
the removal of the cause.

In the form the result of irritation  
the first indication is to remove  
the cause of the irritation, when it  
is slight the removal of the cause  
is sufficient to produce a cure  
this is produced by some cathartic  
and for this purpose rhubarb is  
best as after the cathartic effect



has been produced there is an astringent effect of the achi which stops any further discharge.

When there is a green color to the discharge showing a deranged state of the biliary organs some astringent should be combined with the cathartic.

In giving cathartics it should be remembered that they are only given to accomplish a certain object and when that object is accomplished the further continuance of them are a positive injury to the patient. When worms are the cause they should be destroyed by some vermifuge followed by a cathartic.

At this point of the discharge does not cease the treatment is changed and we control the discharge by astringents for this, some of the vegetable astringents are best as Kino, Katakchu, Kino &c



The infusion of *Geranium maculatum*  
is a good remedy for children  
owing to its not unpleasant taste

The following is a formula much  
used in this Hospital in cases of  
simple diarrhoea

℞ Creta Preparata  
Pulv. Acacia aa ʒi  
Tinc. Catechu ʒi  
" Opii ʒi  
Oil Cinnamon ℥ss.  
Water ʒv

M. Of this mixture a table spoon  
should be given three times a day  
care should be taken in regard to  
the patient's diet which should  
be such as yields very little yields  
excrementitious matter boiled milk  
porridge is a diet which is  
very good in this account.

I now come to speak of the most serious part of the subject - the Chronic form as found in the Army & Navy we find this to vary much from the Chronic Diarrhoea of civil practice. In speaking of this disease I find my self obliged to proceed without the help of books and to rely on my own observations and the instructions of my teachers as this disease has been so lately brought before the profession that comparatively little has been written on the subject so that in my treatment of the subject I shall be liable to many mistakes which with the books for guides would be otherwise avoided.

There is perhaps no more troublesome complaint which the

surgeon in the field meets with than  
chronic diarrhoea resisting as it  
does at times every means of  
cure gradually drawing the patient  
to that hour from which no  
traveler returns.

To show the importance of this  
disease in Army Hospital  
practice I will refer to the records  
of the Knight Hospital.

The number of patients admitted  
to this hospital up to Nov. 29<sup>th</sup> / 63  
was 2034 of these 1049 were admitted  
from wounds and 985 from disease.  
Of the 985 admitted from  
disease 213 or nearly one fifth  
the number was from Chronic  
Diarrhoea of the 1049 who were  
admitted from wounds  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the number had diarrhoea  
as an accompaniment and  
of those who had some other disease

had diarrhoea as an accompaniment  
From these statements I think that  
I shall be safe in saying that  
chronic diarrhoea is one of the <sup>five</sup>  
most frequent visitants of the camp  
of all of the grim monsters (diseases)  
I now come to the more difficult part  
the consideration of the cause, symptoms  
& treatment of chronic diarrhoea.

As to the cause we have in  
the soldiers life all of those  
causes which would produce the  
simple form acting with very  
much more power than in civil  
life and also a continuation of  
those causes after the acute stage  
is formed which carries the disease  
into a chronic form.

The food of the soldier is one of  
the great causes being for the  
greater part of the time obliged  
to subsist on one kind of food



the almost entire absence of vegetable  
and particularly of green vegetable  
food from his rations, the continued  
exposures of the march going from  
the heated exhausted state of the  
march to the earthy bed and  
chill of the night, the complete  
irregularity of every previous habit  
the frequent excesses of the soldier's  
life all conspire to fix on him  
this plague spot of the army  
which continues drawing from his  
strength and seldom leaving him  
till he goes to make one more  
of those little mounds that so  
thickly dot the southern hillside  
and tell whose brave men have  
written out our never dying future  
record. In the examinations after  
death my resources for cursing  
the appearances have been somewhat  
limited, but in what I have been

able to learn of the state of parts  
that in many cases the mucous  
membrane of the intestines is thickened  
and of a dark mottled appearance  
interspersed with dark green spots  
the natural appearance of the parts  
entirely gone with a smooth glassy  
appearance of some portions of  
the membrane. Ulceration of the  
intestines does sometimes occur although  
it is not a very common occurrence  
the larger portion of those patients  
having no discharge of blood with  
the fecal matter. In some cases there  
seems to be a morbid irritability of  
the lining membrane and in other  
cases there appears a insensibility of  
the membrane. In examinations after  
death the other organs of the abdominal  
viscera there is usually signs of disease  
and it is not uncommon for a patient  
reduced to the last extremities of life to be

ceased by some other disease and his course suddenly terminated.

The discharge varies much in this disease as in the simple form the patient being sometimes repeatedly called to stool but usual the discharge is of a semi fluid consistency and sometimes contains parts of the undigested food, the patient usually having to evacuate the bowels from three to eight times <sup>during the day</sup>. This state of thing continues the patient becoming gradually <sup>weaker</sup> the skin assumes a sallow hue there is a dark line gathered under the eye the pulse weak and small but usually not much quickened the tongue having a dry appearance slightly furred and having red points around the edges. As the evacuation continues there is considerable gripping pain before a passage which generally relieves it. During the intervals there is



a feeling of lassitude and weakness  
but no positive suffering the patient  
wishing only to be left alone.  
The patient continues in this condition  
for some time with no other change  
than a gradual wearing out of the  
patient's strength the emaciation  
continues the skin grows of a darker  
hue some times of an almost mahog-  
any hue the patient continues in  
this state for some time, when  
some exposure gives a sudden violence  
to the disease, and the patient's  
life is soon terminated.

### Treatment

In the treatment of this disease  
there has been a great variety  
of plans of treatment adopted  
but as yet none have been as  
successful as could have been wished  
the duty of the patient is one  
of the very important things



in this disease. There was recourse  
into the Knighth Hospital June 9. 1662  
240 men from the battle of Marston  
of whom the greater part had  
diarrhoea in connection with their  
wounds. These men had been on  
the army rations of beef & have had  
with very little vegetable food  
they were immediately placed on a  
diet of green vegetables as raw potato  
cabbage onions &c and the effect  
was most marked the patients  
recovering very rapidly.

and all of the patients ~~were~~  
at this time I have recovered with  
all say they feel better for the  
use of vegetable matter in their  
diet.

In regard to the medicine now  
in this disorder most of the  
astriking medicines have been tried  
but with little effect. The treatment

seeming to be directed more against  
the state of the system than  
a checking of the discharge.

The Lead & Opium pill is used in  
this disorder the formula is

Acetate of Lead  $\mathfrak{ss}$

Pulv. Opium  $\mathfrak{grs} \times$

M<sup>y</sup> ft. pills No. 20 of which one  
should be given every four hrs.

but the use of the lead must  
be omitted after a time, as in  
so long a disease we sometimes find  
its specific effect. Tannin is sometimes  
used in the place of the lead  
where there is signs of ulceration.

A pill of Opium Iron and Ipecac  
has been found to have a very  
favorable effect on the disease

The formula is R Pulv. Opium  $\mathfrak{grs} \times$

M<sup>y</sup> ft. pills no XVII " Ipecac " IV

take one three Sulph. Ferri Cassii " XVI

times a day Strychnia " I

This formula is sometimes used  
by leaving out the Sub-species -

this has had a very good effect  
on the patients in this hospital

In the American Medical Times  
of Sep. 5<sup>th</sup> 185 I find an extract

from a pamphlet by Dr. Trask  
of the U.S.A. stating the effect

of the sub. Nit. Bismuthi in  
this form of diarrhoea it was

given 3 or 4 times a day with  
some Hydragargol this was stated

by the writer to have been eminently  
successful in this disease it

was tried at this hospital with  
the good results described by him

did not follow its use very little  
good results being seen from it.

an injection of starch & Iodine given  
at bed time has a very beneficial  
effect in checking the discharge and  
quieting the patient

after all the treatment of this  
disorder is very unsatisfactory  
and there is a wide field for  
improvement in this disease.

A pill of colomel and opium  
is used by some for the purgative  
effect of the opium and the  
alterative effect of the colomel  
great attention is necessary in  
regard to the clothing of the  
patient such a measure as dress  
as to be light warm and to guard  
the patient against sudden change.  
Moderate exercise is good  
to such an extent as not to  
fatigue the patient: with the  
few disconnected remarks I will leave  
the subject <sup>and myself</sup> in your hands.





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