

den supervention of paraplegia; for, in affections of the spinal cord, where the morbid change is of a chronic nature, the paralytic effects are less abrupt than in injuries or acute disease.

These physiological remarks find a place where some notice should appear in respect of prognosis and treatment; is it necessary, however, to confess that these cases are incurable?

Hydatid cysts have likewise been known to produce fatal paralysis. Five such cases are recorded by Ollivier, and, curiously enough, all occurred in females. In three, the cellular membrane on the external surface of the vertebral column was the primary seat of the parasitic growth, whence it spread in the track of the nerves, through the intervertebral foramen, to the external surface of the dura mater. One of these cases, which fell under the observation of M. Chaussier, is so interesting that I will venture to transcribe it.

An embroiderer, aged 22, after various premonitory symptoms, at the seventh month of her pregnancy, became suddenly paralysed in both lower extremities. Micturition and defecation also became more and more difficult, and less frequent. At the full period, parturition was accomplished without pain, the cries of the child and the rapid diminution of bulk being the only evidence by which the woman was assured of the fact.

All went on well till the fourth day, when an attack of fever came on, and from day to day assumed an aggravated form. On the tenth day she died.

On examination, an hydatid cyst, which had formed on the right side of the bodies of the third and fourth dorsal vertebrae, was found to have insinuated itself into the vertebral canal through the fourth intervertebral foramen.

Here, again, we may associate each and every symptom, in the order of its appearance, with the probable development of the acephalocystic formation. The first sensation of numbness in the right arm was doubtless attributable to pressure on the nerves of Wrisberg, or cutaneous nerves of the arm (the anterior branches of the second and third dorsal nerves), as were the subsequent disturbances of the right eye, and of the vascular system to pressure and irritation of the right sympathetic nerve. I have already had occasion to allude to the influence of the sympathetic on the motions of the eye, and its vaso-motor power is universally admitted. M. Colin, however, has shown that its sensibility is more effectively aroused by pressure than by any other means (*Comptes Rendus*, Mai 13, 1861, p. 969); and Dr. Augustus Waller has pointed out the fact that pressure on the trunk of the nerve gives rise to embarrassed respiration and disturbance of the heart's action (*Proceedings of the Royal Society for 1861*, No. 44, p. 382), symptoms which occurred in the course of the case in question.

It will be observed that up to the seventh month of pregnancy no symptom existed which might not have been caused by pressure on nervous trunks outside the vertebral canal; but the supervention of paraplegia attested the existence of a lesion of the spinal cord itself; and the question is, of what special part? Was it compression of the external white columns or of the internal grey substance to which the paralyzing influence was due? The gradual penetration and intrusion of the cyst seems to favour the idea that it was the former; for, as the pressure was at no time so great as to produce disorganisation of the cord, it is reasonable to presume that the longitudinal columns suffered more than the grey substance.

Another interesting phenomenon was the painless, yet effective contraction of the uterus; and herein some light is thrown by the observations of M. Bracht, which render it probable that absolute destruction of the spinal cord is necessary for the perfect inertia of the uterus (*Fonctions du Système Nerveux Ganglionnaire*); hence it would appear that, in paraplegia from simple compres-

sion of the cord, the sensibility of the uterus may be suspended or destroyed, whilst its contractile energy remains undisturbed. And this contractility appears to be of a reflex character, for it may be excited by the application of cold to the surface of the abdomen, by the introduction of the hand, or even by placing the child at the breast.

Whilst, therefore, I am disposed to think that, from pressure on the white columns of the cord, the nervous communication between the brain and uterus was cut off, it appears that an independent reflex action was preserved in the comparatively uninjured portion of the cord, and that to this latter operation the expulsion of the fœtus and the subsequent startings of the legs were due.

[To be continued.]

Transactions of Branches.

SOUTH-EASTERN BRANCH: WEST KENT DISTRICT MEETING.

CASE OF PHTHISIS MASKED IN ITS LAST STAGE BY PRECORDIAL DISTRESS.

By FREDERICK J. BROWN, M.D., Rochester.

[Read September 25th, 1863.]

GEORGE G., aged 45½ years, residing at Chatham, died on September 9th, 1863. The death-certificate was worded "Phthisis"—6 months.

I first saw him on August 12th. He was greatly emaciated, suffering from hectic fever, and perspiring profusely. He complained of pain and a sense of obstruction at the epigastrium, midway between the xiphoid cartilage and the umbilicus. The bowels resisted medicine for four or five days together, then operated once or twice, and again became obstinately confined. There was no complaint of cough. There was no abdominal tumour. His health had declined for two years; but he continued at his work as an artisan until thirteen weeks before his death. He was thought to be suffering under abdominal cancer.

A *post mortem* examination was made twenty-five hours and a half after death. There was extreme emaciation. The stomach and intestines were healthy. The liver was fatty, and presented a nutmeg appearance. The spleen was large and firm. The pancreas was wasted. The kidneys were natural. The right suprarenal capsule was natural; the left one was not examined, through an accidental omission.

Examination of the thorax showed excessive wasting of the heart. This organ did not appear to be more than one-third of its normal size, and it presented a whitish aspect. Its structure was not lacerable. The right lung was strongly adherent at its apex. There was a ragged vomica occupying the upper sixth of the lung. Yellow tubercle was disseminated through the lung, crude in some parts, softened in others. The left lung presented the most extraordinary appearance that I have ever seen. It was wholly adherent, but split up longitudinally into two slips with ragged ulcerated surfaces.

REMARKS. The remarks that I have to make on this case are but few. In the first place, the man was never properly examined during life. The stethoscope was not used at all. This case shows the necessity of examining the lungs in all wasting diseases; and it also shows the danger of jumping at conclusions. This man must have expectorated purulent matter whilst he was engaged at his work; but, being of a quiet disposition, he had maintained a reserve on this subject sufficient to mislead his wife and friends. I would also remark that cancer of the abdominal organs is an unsafe diagnosis in the

absence of a tumour. Having confessed errors of omission and commission, I bring the case forward as a remarkable one, inasmuch as the lung-disease was completely masked by the solar plexus neuralgia. I judge that the neuralgia was due to the wasting of the heart. Two medical practitioners that saw the case, independently of one another, overlooked the lung-disease.

P.S.—Since writing this case, I have ascertained that the pulmonary disease was recognised by a surgeon previously to the last three months of the patient's life. There were cough and abundant expectoration during that surgeon's attendance.

British Medical Journal.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24TH, 1863.

THE PROFESSION AND THE PUBLIC.

NOTHING can more strongly show the untrue position which our profession holds in the estimation of the public at large than the extreme ignorance which even the educated public betrays on all matters which touch the practice of our art. However highly, as individuals, members of our profession may rank in general estimation, it is a fact that, as a profession, we are, socially speaking, grossly maligned and grossly misunderstood, or utterly ignored; and this, not on isolated occasions, but almost on all public occasions. The public press, as a rule, takes infinite pleasure in girding at us; and the more influential the press, the more marked the girding. Or, again, the proceedings of our body are ignored as being matter of no kind of public interest. Fullest reports are given of the opening of a ragged school at Sloughton-on-the-Moor, but not a word of the meeting of the *British Medical Association* either in London or at Bristol. This latter fact was markedly referred to by the *Social Science Review*.

"The first of the great social and scientific congresses of the present year, the annual meeting of the British Medical Association, has passed off with singular success. The meeting was held at Clifton, Bristol, under the presidency of one of the most accomplished of English physicians, Dr. Symonds. The proceedings of the congress on this occasion were of such immense public interest and importance, that on their own merits we should have been disposed to report them in all their details, as we have done in the forthcoming pages; but we feel another reason for supplying so free a record; we wish to introduce more distinctly to the notice of the general public the scientific progress and labours of that great section of the community to whom are confided responsibilities the most onerous, duties the most sacred. The time has arrived, we think, when the public ought to give a little more careful attention to the Æsculapian fraternity; ought to inquire, for its own sake, more closely into the progress of medical art; ought to question, if not critically, earnestly, the advances that are being made by the professed healers of corporeal evils; and, instead of constantly carping at the art, should look at it as something that is to be understood, and as something which might advance rapidly, if the cold hand of an ignorant and boastful tyranny were not ever upon it.

"We may take the late medical congress at Bristol as a fair type of the figure and thought of medicine as it exists at this moment; we have had it there presented to us voluntarily and openly. The public has not gone out of its way to inquire after the doctors, but the doctors have united to show themselves and their science to the public. They have met, argued, and discussed in broad daylight. The press has had free entrance, and scholars of all kinds have found no denial. It is, then, carelessness, and little less than insolent inattention to its own interest, not less than to the profession, for the intelligent section of the community to stand still outside the pale, making no inquiry as to what has been done, and as to what is promised to be done. Yet how remarkable the apathy! If the bankers of England had held a conference at Bristol, or the stock-brokers, or the insurance companies, or the politicians, what attention they would have secured; how would the London papers have teemed with the sayings and doings of the men who held the great meetings of bankers or other craft! As it was, some three hundred men, all scholars, met to discuss questions relating to the very existency on which all crafts depend: met to carry on debates, upon the result of which the practical meeting of death in endless disguises may largely turn: and not one metropolitan paper of an extra-professional kind, except our own, cares to give those proceedings so much as a column of notice."

Surely all this is very deplorable. And is there no remedy for it? Are we ever to occupy an ignored social position? And why do we hold such a position? Is the fault our own? or are we to look outside the profession for a remedy to the evil? On this score, referring to the above extract from the *Social Science Review*, we cannot forbear noticing the truly unprofessional spirit exercised by the *Lancet* on the occasion of our Bristol meeting. The *Lancet* considered that the proceedings of that meeting were utterly unworthy of notice in its pages! A journal, which every week devotes columns to matters of extra-professional interest, has no space for recording even a summary of the doings of the annual meeting of this Association, notwithstanding the notorious fact that matters of the highest importance both to the scientific and social position of our profession were there brought forward! Last year the *Lancet* attempted to smother our Association by its attentions; its whole weekly number, or something like it, having been devoted to the recording of our annual proceedings. Having failed in that notable attempt, it now tries it on in the other line. It calculates to send the Association into oblivion by coldness and neglect. How does that journal square the proceeding with all its fine verbal indignation of last year, of its being the true recorder of the earliest information of matters medical?

We now add an extract from the *Daily Telegraph*, which surpasses in ignorance, and, from its language, we may fairly add brutality, anything which has lately appeared in the way of injuring the profession. Speaking of the late conviction of a herbalist for manslaughter, the journal says:

"It is customary in these horrible cases, especially with the medical press, to make an onset upon the body of 'herbalists', and point the moral so as to pierce them