Clinical Department.

A CASE OF CONGENITAL CRETINISM.¹

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This child came to my service in the Out-Patient Department of the Children's Hospital some two weeks ago. I sent it into the house, where it is in the service of Dr. Morrill, who kindly permitted me to show the case to-night. The child is two years and five months old and shows the characteristic appearance of cretinism, although it has already begun to improve under treatment by thyroid extract. In the first place, you see it is very much dwarfed — twenty-four and a half

inches tall — about the size of a baby of a year. A baby of this age ought to be at least thirty-three inches tall. Not only is it small in general growth, but the extremities are all stunted. The characteristic things about the face are the flattened base of the nose and the protruding tongue. The tongue has already begun to go into its mouth; it was sticking out much more two weeks ago, before treatment was begun. The tongue then measured one and one-half inches in breadth. Another thing the child has already lost, under treatment, is the waxy pallor. There is already color in its cheeks. The skin was also very dry, especially on the hands and feet. You can still feel the semi-edematous condition of the skin, which does not

¹ Shown before the Boston Society for Medical Improvement, November 7, 1898.

pit on pressure, but the roughness is to a large extent gone. It has an umbilical hernia, which is not uncommon in cretins. Pads of fat can be felt above the clavicles. The general condition is one of mental as well as physical torpor, although the child has already begun to show a little more intellectual brightness than when it was first seen. It cut its first tooth at eighteen months and now has eight teeth. It cannot stand alone yet. The thyroid gland cannot be felt.

The treatment consists of thyroid extract, beginning with a dose of one-half a grain three times daily. I hope to show the child again at the end of the year, markedly improved.

It is interesting to compare with this another case, the photograph of which I have here. It came to my service two years ago and shows the remarkable results of treatment. The child was then four years old and was only twenty-eight inches tall — not much taller than a normal child of a year and a half. The child was unable to stand, had the stupid expression and the characteristic features of this child here to-night — the depressed nose, large protruding tongue, stunted arms and legs, and a condition of complete idiocy. In both of these cases the thyroid glands could not be felt. In 60 cases collected by Osler, and presented by him in Washington a year ago, there were only seven in which the thyroid gland was felt or was enlarged. This case was put on thyroid treatment, beginning with one-half grain of the extract and increasing to one and a half grains three times a day. At times it was necessary to diminish the dose owing to the nervous excitability it produced in the child. The temperature in both of these cases was subnormal when first seen, and in this case and in the other it became normal or a little elevated under treatment. This child when four years old had no teeth at all, and the teeth cropped out in the most remarkable way during treatment. Four months after treatment the child had cut seven teeth and grown two inches in height, and the circumference of its head was increased one-half inch. Six months after treatment had begun the child had twelve very good teeth, had grown another inch and a half, and the circumference of the head had increased another one-half inch. The mental improvement was marked. It began to notice strangers and would be shy in their presence, like a normal infant. It became brighter, smiled, and began to say a few words.

I will pass around two other photographs. This case came to me at the Children's Hospital in 1891, before we knew of the treatment by thyroid extract, and the child was not treated and died a few months later of some intestinal disease. I reported the case in the *Archives of Pediatrics*. This other case was a most remarkable one, a cretin thirty-eight years old, at the Lying-in Hospital. She was seven months pregnant, and weighed, with her clothes and the seven-months fetus, sixty-five and a half pounds. I reported the case before the American Pediatric Society.

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