

A FOREIGN BODY SWALLOWED BY A CHILD SEVENTEEN WEEKS OLD.

A CASE OF SO-CALLED HAIRY TONGUE.

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1. In the latter part of 1903, a mother brought her baby to the Presbyterian Hospital for professional advice. The history as given by her was as follows: The baby had been healthy since birth. A few days before when it was just 17 weeks old, it had gotten hold of a round button with a sharp pointed brass pin on its back for attaching it to the coat and had swallowed it. The button was an advertisement of the Morning Herald and was probably not quite half an inch in diameter while the pin was perhaps a little longer, projecting below the border of the button. In great alarm, the mother took the child at once to a hospital where the use of the X-Rays revealed the foreign body in the œsophagus. The operation of œsophagotomy was proposed for its removal. This was declined. A careful examination of the child as to its throat and its general physical condition showed nothing abnormal. Since the child seemed as bright as babies usually are at its tender age and there were no symptoms of œsophageal obstruction, the mother was advised to do nothing unless some symptoms developed when she was to bring the child to the hospital at once. She was told to watch the stools closely as there was a probability that the button might be passed at any time. The case had passed entirely out of my memory when ten weeks later the woman appeared at the hospital without the child. She approached me with a broad smile on her face and showed me the button which the child had passed that day. She reported that the baby was apparently none the worse for its experience. One year later the condition of the infant was good and there were no symptoms to indicate that there had been any ill effects from the passage of the button through the intestines. Considering the age of the patient and the large size of the foreign body the case is rather a remarkable one. Had the operation of œsophagotomy been performed at so early an age, it is probable that the child would not have recovered.

2. In an article published in the *New York and Philadelphia Medical Journal* about two years ago, I described the rare condition known as hairy tongue. The patient was an elderly man, who had experienced a persistent tickling sensation in the roof of his mouth.

Examination revealed a circumscribed bunch of hairs on the dorsum of his tongue which caused the symptom. Recently I have seen another case more peculiar in some respects than the first. The patient was a colored male, 35 years old, who presented himself at the Presbyterian Hospital with a sore throat. The lesion responsible for the pain on swallowing was a large ulcer on the right tonsil. Incidentally, a peculiar furred condition of the tongue was noted. The dorsum of the organ was of a black color and the filiform papillæ were very much thickened and prolonged. All over the tongue the papillæ could be raised with the probe until the dorsum resembled the back of a porcupine. The base of each papilla was very thick and projecting from this was a thin prolongation resembling somewhat a hair in appearance. The large number of the papillæ gave the impression of a mass of hairs growing on the tongue. The black discoloration seemed to be confined to the prolongations since the thickened bases were of a pale color. The condition was no doubt akin to or identical with the so-called hairy tongue. The patient was given mixed treatment for his ulceration and told to return in one week's time. The next week he returned the furred condition of the tongue had entirely disappeared. Inquiry revealed the fact that there had never been any abnormal sensations in the mouth nor had the patient ever observed that there was anything wrong with his tongue. He gave no history of indigestion which is sometimes seen in these cases of hairy tongue. Whether there was any connection between the internal medication and the disappearance of the trouble, I do not know, but it would be well to bear it in mind in the therapy of such cases. Since the report of my first case four or five others have appeared in the literature bringing the total number up to about forty. The various theories as to its causation and the methods of treatment are referred to in my former article.

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