

sis may be referred to three heads—inspection, auscultation, and percussion. To each of these I shall briefly direct attention.

[To be continued.]

SEMINAL AND OTHER DISCHARGES FROM THE URETHRA.*

By Benjamin Phillips, F.R.S., Surgeon to St. Marylebone Infirmary.

It is now many weeks since I forwarded to you two communications having reference to the subject of involuntary discharges of spermatic fluid. And as those communications have considerably enlarged my experience, and that in comparatively a very short time, so as to enable me to bring the cases more vividly to my mind than I could do on a former occasion, I have concluded that the results of my experience on the subject during the last three months might go far to show the value of the remedy to which, on those occasions, I endeavored to direct attention.

The number of cases which have come under my notice since that time amounts to thirty-three; of these, twenty-three have been medical men—some in practice, others in *statu pupillaris*. In twenty-four instances it was admitted that masturbation had been practised; in some cases so frequently as twice or three times a day, but in all those cases it was stated that the habit had been abandoned. In two cases it was said that masturbation had never been practised; supposing that to be true, the only way to account for the discharge was to assume that irritation was set up by a natural phymosis. We frequently see, even in young children, that when there is inability to uncover the glans, the secretion around the corona glandis does become acrid and troublesome. Whether in adults a similar irritation will of *itself* induce spermatic discharges, is to me very doubtful; I can readily understand that it may induce masturbation. In two cases the affection was said to be the result of sexual excesses. In two cases the only apparent cause was stricture. In one case the cause seemed to be a frequent indulgence in reading lascivious books. In one instance the genital excitement resulted from study, or from the perusal of works of imagination.

Such have been the probable causes of the complaint. Its urgency was very variable; in some cases the discharge did not happen more than once in a week or ten days; in others daily; in others twice or even three times a day. The effects on the constitution were not less variable. In one case, where the discharge happened commonly three times a day, and where it had continued more or less for twelve years, the patient being at present 24, the buoyancy of his frame was very little disturbed; he could walk eight or ten miles without fatigue; whilst in other cases, where it happened once or twice a week, the physical and moral impression has been most profound. Much of this, no doubt, results from the hold the complaint obtains upon the apprehension of the patient.

In two cases the complaint co-existed with epilepsy; what direct relation the diseases bore to each other was not very evident. In two cases

* See pages 35 and 89.

there was very considerable digestive disturbance ; flatulence and irregularity of the bowels were much complained of. In most of them there was constipation ; and unless that was carefully attended to, the genital distress was increased. In five cases palpitation of the heart was complained of ; in four, " swimming " sensations in the head, failing memory, inability to apply to anything. I cannot help thinking that, in some cases, the alleged failure of memory is owing to the intense pre-occupation of the mind with the complaint, and to the little impression which any other subject makes on it. Such have been the grand features in the cases to which I have referred.

With respect to treatment, the following are the results. Seven are at present under my care ; five I think are doing well, two are not so satisfactory. Of the twenty-six cases which are off my hands, eighteen have been more or less completely relieved ; in eight instances no sensible permanent good was derived either from caustic or other remedies, though there was complete remission of the discharges for many days. In more than one of these cases I suspect the mischief has been kept up by some imprudent but concealed habit. In one case, I found the patient lay in bed till mid-day, or even later, and that the discharge generally came on once or twice between 9 and 12 o'clock. I have no doubt it was caused by conjuring up mischievous images. I requested him to get up at 9 o'clock, and the evil was, for the time, at once stayed.

With respect to the plan of treatment I employed, it depended on the circumstances of the cases. In seven cases no acute pain was felt any where during the passage of the bougies ; in one it occasioned a feeling as if a seminal emission was about to occur. In those seven cases I was content to try the effect of the bougie smeared with mercurial ointment, or merely oiled, and introduced twice a week ; but although there was, in several cases, a considerable improvement, complete relief was obtained in only two instances. In nineteen instances I used the caustic. Of these cases ten were completely relieved by a single application ; in three the amelioration was decided, though the complaint was not cured ; in six there was no relief. In the nine cases in which the first application was insufficient, the remedy was again used—in three cases with complete success, in six without any evident amelioration ; so that it succeeded in two thirds of the cases in which it was applied, a result which, if confirmed by succeeding experience, would stamp it as a remedy of great value, though less certain than my previous impressions had led me to think.

On no single occasion have I known a patient to complain of the pain attendant upon the application of the caustic being severe ; in many instances it did not seem to be greater than that of the inconvenience of introducing a bougie. In one single instance only did I experience any after trouble. A patient had caustic applied, without complaining of suffering ; in four days afterwards he came to me with retention of urine. On the previous day he had walked far, and ate a good dinner, and it was after that he found a difficulty in passing urine. In many cases a little blood, usually a drop or two, has escaped on the next occasion of making water after the application ; but sometimes it has occurred two or three times.

In no case have I known the discharge which should follow the use of the caustic extend beyond a week, and usually it is very trifling. I believe the remedy is much more effectual when it induces a pretty copious discharge.

My summary then is this :—the caustic was applied in 19 cases ; in 13 it succeeded, in 6 it failed ; but in no case was there any aggravation of the symptoms ; in no case was any complaint made of the amount of pain attendant upon the application ; in only one case was any after inconvenience complained of. In several cases some drops of blood escaped with the urine ; in some cases there was scarcely any appearance of discharge after it ; in no case did the discharge extend beyond the seventh day.

It will be observed, then, that though the amount of good derived from the use of caustic is considerable, it is by no means a specific : but there is one class of cases in which the effect is remarkable ; those in which very excited sensibility exists beyond the curvature, the disease seeming to depend upon the irritability seated in the vicinity of the opening of the ejaculatory ducts. In some cases this is so remarkable that the passage of a bougie over the part may actually induce emission. There are, however, many cases in which no such pain is discoverable, and in those cases I have not so much confidence in the efficacy of the caustic. In those cases the exciting cause of the emission is often habit. Masturbation or excesses having been long continued, the secretory action of the testicle is increased in proportion to the frequency of the calls made upon it ; the vesicles are always full, the ducts are lax, and the fluid easily pressed forward. These cases improve under constant changing, occupation for the mind, and general tonic treatment. In one instance I have observed great good to result from the use of the tincture of cantharides carried to the extent of determining heat at the neck of the bladder, but in other cases I have known it fail.

I might allude to other plans of treatment, but as the present paper is merely a complement to the other, it might seem out of place.—*London Medical Gazette.*

EPIDEMIC ERYSIPELAS IN VERMONT.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—As I have been requested to furnish some intelligence of the epidemic which has prevailed more or less in various parts of this State for some considerable time, I have supposed a communication to your useful Journal would answer a good purpose. I am the rather induced to take this mode, as I see from statements in the public papers that it begins to appear in some towns in Massachusetts. I have not *seen* so much of the disease as some physicians, but I have *felt* it in my own person, and thus have acquired some practical knowledge.

With respect to its nature, which many would devote much time and pains to ascertain, I mean to occupy but little space in discussing. What