

which require much observation and attention. It is highly important that practical errors should be corrected, and our science enriched by the observations of all its active members. The progress of truth is often slow, but no less certain; a variety of causes may conspire to retard it; but since the latent energies of the mind are brought to bear upon all practical subjects, and demonstration made the basis of physiological observations, it is confidently believed that the clouds of error and false opinion will be soon dissipated, and that the truth of philosophy, and the light of research will establish the principles of a correct practice.

*Lyndan, July 20, 1827.*

XIV. *A Case of Hydrops Capitis.* Communicated for this Journal by RICHARD HAZELTINE, M.D.

WEDNESDAY morning, May the 9th, 1827, I waited on Mrs K. of this town in her third parturition. I had waited on her at her two former ones. Her first and second labours were comparatively easy and expeditious; but the third, the one of last May, was somewhat protracted and severe; and it was thought proper, during its progress, to administer two doses, with a proper interval between them, of pulv. secal. cornut. The child at birth weighed ten and a quarter pounds; and it was immediately perceived by every one present, that its head was remarkably large. I now regret that I did not at the time take the measurement of the child's head; but I was willing *not to seem* to take much notice of the circumstance, knowing it would wound the mother's feelings. The child appeared perfectly well, for the most part, till within a few days of its death: it did not increase, however, in its body and limbs, as is common to infants of the same age; but its head increased much more in proportion, than other parts of it. It would lie and sleep perfectly easy for an immoderate length of time, were not its slumbers interrupted by the mother, for the sake of nursing and other necessary attentions. About a fortnight before the child died, it began to fail, as was evident by its expressions of distress

upon being taken from the cradle, and moved ; and by its becoming more languid and feeble. The child died very easily and unexpectedly on the 9th of August last, precisely three months old. The next day the head was opened and examined, by Dr E. A. Lummus and myself. The circumstances were as follow :—The head was so much enlarged that the common integuments were stretched upwards to such a degree as to leave the eyes partly open, and the upper part of the eyeballs exposed, and to make a vacancy between them and the *conjunctiva reflexa* lining the upper eyelid. The body measured twenty-seven inches from the top of the head to the extremities of the toes, as it lay on the table. The circumference of the head in its largest part, round the forehead and hind head, was twenty-five and a half inches : from the chin, extending round over the vertex, twenty-six inches. It did not occur to us to measure from ear to ear, over the largest part of the head ; but the father had taken that measurement five days before, and found it fifteen inches and eight lines. The integuments were very tense with the contained fluid ; the sutures were greatly enlarged ; and the proportion of bony *paries*, compared to the whole superficies of the head, was very small. A puncture was made with a scalpel, in the posterior fontanel, near the edge of the *os occipitis*. After the evacuation of most of the fluid, its further discharge was interrupted by the interference of something within the common integuments. This induced us carefully to enlarge the puncture in order to ascertain more particularly the precise situation of the fluid, and the condition of the contents of the cranium. The external integuments and the pericranium were easily and very distinctly separable from each other ; and the former were first divided nearly to the *os frontis*, without enlarging the puncture in the latter : then, upon returning to the puncture to ascertain more particularly what it was that prevented the complete discharge of the fluid ; it was found that the medullary substance of the brain interposed ; and that the whole of that substance was external to the contained fluid, and completely surrounded it except at the basis of the cranium ;

the fluid itself being within the ventricles of the brain, which were thereby thus enormously distended, and their situations and relative proportions to the other parts of the brain, totally obliterated. The substance of the cerebellum was *in situ*, very distinct and much diminished in size, owing to the pressure of the fluid. The medullary substance of the brain, expanded as it was over the vast volume of fluid, was very soft, insomuch that upon being moved in the most gentle manner, it would scarcely retain any thing like a distinct form: its cohesion was almost as weak as that of a very loose jelly. The bones of the cranium were remarkably flexible. There were no traces of inflammation, purulence or putrescence; and the odour emanating from the several parts under inspection, was nothing different from that emitted from any ordinary healthy internal animal substance. The fluid was nearly colourless, and without ropiness. It was carefully collected as it was discharged, and was found to weigh seven and a quarter pounds: perhaps four ounces were unavoidably spilt. All the parts, even those subjected to the operations of the knife, were bloodless; there was scarcely blood enough found during the examination, to give a stain to any thing.

As this was the first case of the kind that I ever saw, I did not bestow much medical attention to the infant: and upon consulting some of my professional brethren older than myself, both in and out of town, upon the subject, I did not think that much, if any thing, could be done to advantage. In the earlier part of June, a solution of muriate of ammonia in vinegar, was applied to the head, for ten days or a fortnight; and cathartic medicines, such as calomel, senna, sulphate of soda, &c. &c. were employed daily or every other day, for some time. These medicines evidently produced a depressing effect on the system of the infant, as was manifest from the languor, diminished heat, moaning, and spasms, as the mother expressed herself, which succeeded; insomuch that it was thought expedient to discontinue them; especially as they appeared to produce no diminution in the size of the head. How effectually a perseverance in the use of those medicines might eventually have contributed to the evacua-

tion of the fluid is uncertain ; but were another case to occur in my practice, I should, with the consent of parents, make a more efficient trial of them.

I find occasion for very few remarks on this case. In such cases a physician may well be excused for doing nothing, when his efforts are opposed, as they commonly are, by the sympathy of parents, and their unwillingness to incur expense without much prospect of advantage. Where, however, these obstacles do not oppose the endeavours of a physician, there seems to be sufficient encouragement given from the result of a few cases on record, to induce him to make trial of the means of art, and not wholly to abandon such patients to their fate.

Very interesting histories of this disease are to be found in the *New-York Medical Repository*, vol. 8, p. 38 ; also vol. 19, from the beginning, pp. 174, 296, and 405 ; and also in the *Philadelphia Medical Recorder*, vol. 4, p. 448.—Dr Good's account of the disease is the most satisfactory of any that I have read ;—' *Study of Medicine*,' vol. 4, p. 260, Boston Edition of 1823, Wells and Lilly. ' *Hydrops Capitis*.'

*Lynn, Sept. 8, 1827.*

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## SECTION II.—SELECTIONS, WITH REMARKS.

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XXVIII. *Account of the Medical Statistics of Paris.*  
*Translated for this Journal from the Journal des Pro-*  
*grés des Sciences et Institutions Médicales en Europe, en*  
*Amerique, &c. &c.*

FROM a work which has lately been published in Paris, upon the *Medical Statistics* of that city, by MM. Villermé and Benoiston, we make the following extracts :—

The total number of births registered at Paris during the century, from 1710 to 1810 is 1,931,897 ; and the total number of deaths is 1,935,579.

1st. During the first twenty years, the average number of annual births was about 18,000. It amounted to 18,500 during the twenty