

farm; tin workers are generally within reach; the sun shines everywhere; and perseverance, tact and ingenuity are traits of common cultivation. Let these instruments be adopted, not to supersede but to supplement the ordinary methods of exploration in these parts which are so often affected by disease, and which ordinary therapeutics fail to reach.

Woburn, Nov. 18th, 1863.

**CLINICAL DATA RESPECTING AMAUROSIS, MORE ESPECIALLY
RESPECTING THAT FORM OF IT SUPPOSED TO BE
INDUCED BY TOBACCO.**

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THE author stated that his attention had been drawn to the question of the possible influence of smoking in causing amaurosis by some papers which had recently appeared in the medical journals. He had collected together all the cases of true cerebral amaurosis of which he had taken notes during the past four years; they did not comprise all that had come under his care, but most of the more interesting ones. The cases quoted were 65 in number, and were allotted to three groups:—First, cases in which both eyes were affected and the patients were adults (47); secondly, cases in which both eyes were affected and the patients were children (11); and, thirdly, cases of amaurosis of only one eye (7). The subjoined table will show the relative proportion of the two sexes in each group:—

		Males.	Females.
Series I.—Symmetrical, and in Adults:—			
Cerebral amaurosis, uncomplicated (idiopathic)		37	3
Ditto, probably complicated or secondary . . .		3	4
Series II.—Symmetrical, and in Children:—			
Cerebral amaurosis, uncomplicated (idiopathic)		3	7
Ditto, probably complicated or secondary . . .		0	1
Series III.—Unsymmetrical (all ages)		3	4

In this table, all the cases in which there was good reason to suspect that the amaurosis was secondary to other disease were considered as complicated; in the others (idiopathic) he had been unable, on careful inquiry, to discover any satisfactory explanation of the disease. It would be noted that a most remarkable difference in the relative proportion of the two sexes existed in the idiopathic class of the first series, and that this discrepancy was not found in the other groups. Mr. Hutchinson then proceeded to inquire as to how this great disproportion (37 men to 3 women) could be explained. The possible influence, 1st, of different occupations; 2d, of intemperance; 3d, of sexual irregularities; 4th, of venereal diseases; 5th, of injuries; and lastly, of tobacco, were severally exa-

mined. That occupation had not much to do with it seemed clear from the fact that the patients had followed most various callings; and as to syphilis and intemperance, to neither of these was the male sex exposed in sufficiently disproportionate degree to account for the very different numbers. In only 4 of the whole number of cases was there any history of injury to the head; and in 2 only of these could it be reasonably inferred that the injury had been the exciting cause of the disease. There remained then the possible influence of tobacco-smoking and of sexual excesses. The author stated strongly his conviction that the real explanation of the majority of cases of this form of amaurosis would be found in one or other of these two. Whether tobacco had any share, or whether all should be attributed to the former, he could not say. He wished to abstain for the present from any positive opinion, and simply begged to call attention to the clinical facts. It might possibly prove that, after all, this disproportion in the sexes was a mere coincidence, and that a larger collection of cases would show it to be such.

Amongst the conclusions obtained by analysis of the series of cases, the following are the more important:—In 23 of the 37 cases, it was recorded that the patients had smoked; whilst in 2 it was expressly stated that they had never done so; and in 12 there was no information. In 10 the patients had been intemperate. In only 2 could it be ascertained that the patients had had constitutional syphilis. In 4 instances the sufferers attributed their disease to anxiety. The disease had progressed to absolute blindness in 15 instances; in 5 it appeared to have been arrested; and in most of the others it was either progressive at the last date of notes, or the patient had ceased to attend.

With regard to the probability of sexual excesses having anything to do with the causation of the disease in question, the author stated that in not a few he had obtained the history of failure of sexual power. He had also found that varicocele was a frequent concomitant of this form of amaurosis. Still, on the other hand, in many instances the patients were healthy, robust men, who ailed nothing whatever excepting the loss of sight. In no single instance in the series was there any strong reason for attributing the disease to masturbation. Even if it were proved that varicocele, wasted testes, and loss of generative function were usual concomitants of this form of amaurosis in the male, still the tobacco hypothesis would not be wholly set aside, since the two classes of symptoms might both be due to one common cause. It was remarkable that in almost all the few cases in which the disease occurred idiopathically in females, there was the history of very decided disturbance of menstruation.

Although he felt that there were great difficulties in the way of belief in the tobacco hypothesis—such, for instance, that many of

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those affected had smoked only quite moderately; that many had smoked for a long series of years before the amaurosis supervened; that thousands and thousands smoked to great excess without ever suffering from amaurosis; that it was not easy to understand how the tobacco poison could act on one single nervous ganglion alone, the other parts of the nervous system escaping—still, the author added, he thought there was enough of suspicion in the clinical facts to make it the duty of ophthalmic surgeons to insist on the disuse of tobacco in all cases in which the premonitory symptoms of this disease were presented. The subject was one well worthy of prolonged investigation, and no doubt it would soon be set at rest one way or the other.

In concluding his paper Mr. Hutchinson begged to note the following desiderata:—

1. A much more extended series of cases.
2. More detailed information as to the use of tobacco by those affected by this form of amaurosis.
3. Information as to whether there may not be a considerable proportion of men afflicted by it who have never used tobacco.
4. Information as to the co-existence or otherwise of varicocele with this form of amaurosis.
5. Information as to whether it ever occurs in women who have smoked. In some countries where smoking is more common amongst women than it is here, valuable information on this head might be obtained.
6. Better knowledge as to whether the course of the disease can in any considerable number of cases be suspended—1st, by making the patient give up smoking; or, 2d, by regulation of sexual habits.

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AMBULANCE CORPS OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.—A friend has placed in our hands a copy of General Order No. 85, dated August 24th, 1863, containing "revised regulations for the organization of the Ambulance Corps and the management of the Ambulance Trains." We should be very glad, did space permit, to publish the order entire, but we must be content with giving merely a synopsis.

The first regulation provides that the Army Corps shall be the unit of organization for the ambulance corps, and the latter will be organized upon the basis of Captain as the commandant of the corps, one 1st Lieutenant for each division, one 2nd Lieutenant for each Brigade, one Sergeant for each regiment.

2. The privates of this corps will consist of two men and one driver to each ambulance, and one driver to each medicine wagon.