

CASES OF TYPHOID FEVER DEPENDENT UPON CONTAMINATED DRINKING-WATER.

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THE following is a brief history of eleven cases of typhoid fever which I attended in the autumn of 1875. These cases are interesting, first, because with two exceptions they occurred among the members of a single school of thirty children, twenty of whom were attacked. Second, because the epidemic was distinctly traced to sewage poisoning, the source of the infection being the drinking-water used by the school. This water was drawn from a well twenty feet deep, dug the preceding summer, within five feet of the rear of an old house and within fifteen feet of the back door where slops have been thrown out for more than fifty years. Within five feet of the well runs a board sink-drain liable to choke up and overflow. In this house lived a family of eleven persons, nine of whom had typhoid fever, but only three of these were under my care. Of the ten scholars who escaped I have positive information that three of them did not drink of the contaminated water, a specimen of which, examined microscopically and chemically, presented evidence of the presence of organic matter, including fibres of cotton, probably from dish-cloths, and showed upon its surface and the sides of a glass which contained it a greasy scum. Third, because the brothers and sisters of these patients who did not attend the school, nor drink the water in question, escaped the infection, as did their parents.

Four of the cases were males ; seven, females. Average age, ten and a half ; youngest, six ; oldest, nineteen and a half. Six of the cases commenced with chills. Eight complained of headache and backache, and one of general muscular soreness. Two had epistaxis. One had ptosis of the left eyelid, followed in three days by otorrhœa on the left side. Five had bronchial symptoms, and four pneumonia. One, a male, complained of globus hystericus. Rose spots were noticed in three cases only. Abdominal symptoms, such as tympanites, gurgling, and tenderness of abdomen, were well marked in nine cases. Six had diarrhœa. In five there was slight delirium. Nausea occurred in two cases, in one of which it was continuous throughout. In two, who were cousins, the eyelids were observed to be œdematous.

The highest temperature was 109° F., fifteen minutes before death ; at the time of death it fell to 108.5° F. In six cases it was 104° F. or over. The pulse rose to 120 or over in every case. In seven it was over 130 ; in five, 150 ; in one, 180 ; and in one, 185. The last two cases were fatal ; in one it rose till death, and in the other it fell during the two days preceding death from 185 to 150. The highest respiration was 56. In ten cases it rose to 30 ; in six to 35 ; and in four to 40.

One had dysenteric discharges, with tenesmus, and vomited matter like verdigris twice. She recovered.

Two of the cases were fatal from intercurrent pneumonia; the rest recovered. Beside the eleven cases above mentioned, two others appear to have been aborted by an emetic of ipecac, exhibited at the onset of the attack. I made no record of the fourteenth case, an irritable child two and a half years old. These children, with one exception, were previously healthy. One of the fatal cases was convalescent from the fever and had a relapse.

Treatment. — Nourishing food, stimulants, and quinine; ipecac emetics in four cases; mild expectorants and astringents for bronchial irritations and diarrhœa; turpentine stupes to the abdomen for tympany; Dover's powder and bromide of potassium *pro re natâ*. The acid treatment recommended by Chambers was perseveringly employed in all.

RECENT PROGRESS IN OBSTETRICS AND GYNÆCOLOGY.

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OBSTETRICS.

*Obstetrical Aspect of Idiocy.*¹ — Dr. J. Langdon Down recently read a most interesting paper on this subject before the Obstetrical Society of London, in which were recorded the results of his observations, which extended over eighteen years and included more than two thousand cases. Primogeniture seemed to play an important part, no less than twenty-four per cent. of all the idiot children observed being primiparous. He attributes this fact largely to the exalted emotional life of the mother. The chief factor, however, was thought to be the increased difficulty in parturition observed in primiparæ. In no less than twenty per cent. suspended animation occurred, and apparently excited a great influence in the production of idiocy. As regards the injurious effect of instruments, Dr. Down found that in only three per cent. of the cases forceps had been employed. A prolonged labor was far more dangerous to the life prospects of the child than a judicious and timely application of the forceps. Two per cent. only of the last thousand cases were twins. A very potential cause in the production of idiocy was the physical health of the mother during the gestation. Prolonged sickness, fright, intense anxiety, and great emotional excitement were all powerful factors in producing idiocy. No facts could be ascertained as to the effect produced by ergot in relation to this subject. More than twice as many male idiots as female were found. This fact is due probably to the larger size of the cranium, which gives rise to a prolonged or difficult parturition, a continued pressure, and suspended animation,

¹ British Medical Journal, December 23, 1876.