

EFFECTS OF SECONDARY SYPHILIS ON OFFSPRING.

[THE following is part of a report on Diseases of Children, made by Dr. Condie, of Philadelphia, to the College of Physicians of that city, and published in their quarterly Summary of Transactions.]

Mr. Acton, Surgeon to the Islington Dispensary, England, adduces three cases, in which constitutional syphilis in the father was the cause of repeated abortions, and, subsequently, of infection of the fœtus born at the full period—the mother remaining throughout wholly free from disease.

A child nine weeks old was brought to him by its mother, on account of an eruption, chiefly papular, over the whole body. The voice was hoarse, and there was a slight discharge from the nose; the palms of the hands presented a scaly, copper-colored eruption. Emaciation was less than is usually observed in children laboring under syphilis; but that peculiar earthy hue of the skin generally, was very evident. The mother stated, that she had been married four years—became pregnant soon after her marriage, and at the full term produced a dead child, the skin of which was dark colored, and peeled off on the slightest touch. During the following year she miscarried. On the occurrence of the third pregnancy, the child that was brought to Mr. A. was born at the full period and perfectly healthy. During the third week, spots were observed on the genital organs, and since then increased constantly in extent. No symptom of either primary or secondary disease, could be discovered in the mother. The father, shortly before his marriage, contracted chancres, was salivated, and secondary symptoms followed. He again took mercury, and believed himself perfectly cured at the time of his marriage. Denies having had any primary symptoms since—but has occasionally seen white spots on his mouth and tongue—has not remarked any spots on his body. There was nothing in his appearance to indicate syphilis, nor could any recent marks be discovered. Mr. A. directed an ointment composed of ungt. hydrarg. nitrat. and spermaceti to be applied to the affected skin, and a powder containing two grains of hydrarg. c. creta, to be given at night. Within a month the child was free from disease, and had regained its healthy appearance.

Mr. A. gives an abridged account of two other cases of secondary syphilis in men, whose wives were free from all disease, but had miscarried. He remarks, that these cases furnish three instances of males affected with constitutional symptoms, who marry and yet fail to communicate any disease to their wives, thus far corroborating our experiments that secondary symptoms are not capable of transmission from an affected male to a healthy female. They moreover make it probable that a male, thus infected, may so far exercise a morbid influence on the embryo, the result of cohabitation between him and a healthy female, as to cause its premature expulsion, or disease it so much, that, soon after birth, secondary symptoms will appear. The first case further induces the belief, that though syphilis may produce a miscarriage, a healthy child can be subsequently born, although no mercury be given to either patient.

If it be true that the father can infect the fœtus without contaminating

the mother, it justifies the surgeon in sparing her a course of mercury—a proceeding always injurious to the child, by deteriorating the milk—and may induce him to treat the child with some mild mercurial, without fear of its being reinfected by suckling the mother—thus offering additional evidence that the mother does not participate in the disease which the child inherits from the father.

CASE OF TUBERCULAR PHTHISIS, WITH MAL-POSITION OF THE HEART, &c.

By H. O. Jewett, M.D.

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Miss S. H., æt. 30, of small stature, delicate conformation, and the ordinary characteristics of a strumous diathesis, had been laboring under a feeble state of health for about six years. The principal manifestations were those of general debility, impaired digestion, derangement of the catamenia, and that train of neuralgic symptoms peculiar to patients of her class. During a great part of this period she had been able to keep about the house, but was subject to increased indisposition from the slightest exciting causes. She has several times been brought quite low, and under mild tonic treatment slowly regained what she had learned to call her standard of health. Some time in February last, this patient suffered from a slight catarrhal affection, which gradually wore away, but left her evidently declining; with aggravation of the neuralgic symptoms, small frequent pulse, slightly-furred tongue, nausea, eructations, and frequent retching, bowels generally torpid, and severe cephalalgia, particularly during the latter part of the day, with occasional dysuria, paucity of the urinary secretion, &c. These symptoms continued to increase; the strength gradually wasting, but emaciation did not go on as rapidly as might have been anticipated, considering the severe gastric irritation and total disgust of every kind of nourishment, which had now become almost constant. This condition continued until the last of May, when I left home for a few days. On my return, about the middle of June, I discovered a marked change in the appearance of my patient. Hectic fever, with its usual symptoms, was fully developed. Emaciation had progressed rapidly, and the nausea had become incessant and extremely distressing; mouth aphthous; bowels still torpid; extremities œdematous; and the vital energies fast sinking under colliquative perspiration and irregular febrile paroxysms. There had been very little pectoral pain or oppression; scarcely any cough, and scanty expectoration, consisting principally of transparent mucus; yet auscultation at this time revealed unequivocal signs of extensive pulmonary disorganization. With this aspect the case continued to advance, and terminated fatally on the 21st of July.

Autopsy.—Thorax much contracted and flattened on the left side. On reflecting off the integuments and raising the sternum, which had nearly approximated the vertebral column, the mediastinum appeared to