

History of a very Fatal Affection of the Pudendum of Female Children; by KINDER WOOD, Esq. Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, and Surgeon at Oldham.

This is a very interesting and a very important paper. The disease appears to be one of those epidemics which occur in camps, fleets, and other situations in which the human race is crowded. It assumes, as we observed when noticing Mr. Makesy's paper on Ophthalmia, all the various forms of general disease, as low fever, scurvy, or cutaneous eruptions, or of local disease, as erysipelas, sometimes in a manner (which, but for the certainty of the fact, we should hardly conceive) confined to particular parts of the body, and showing itself by ulcerated legs, ophthalmia, erysipelatous cheeks, or vesicles about the hands or about the genitals. Astruc first noticed the latter in a fleet, denominating the disease *christallines*, and from the part on which they appeared considering them venereal. We suspect they are more common in civil life than is generally suspected.*

All these diseases are attended more or less with fever, and, if neglected, or the patient is deprived of wholesome diet and air, frequently end in sordid ulcers or gangrene. The description given by Mr. Wood is very correct in all these points. We shall transcribe only the following as connected with an important question in medical jurisprudence. The reader will, perhaps, urge, that, in this instance, the patient was well in her general health until the local symptoms were manifest. But we must always make large allowance for the rank in life of our patient. The early or slighter complaints in the children of poor manufacturers in Manchester are very likely to be overlooked by the parents and even by the children as soon as they are old enough to be constantly employed in earning their daily bread. No wonder, therefore, if the child's indisposition attracted no notice

* See an ingenious paper by Mr. Royston in our Vol. *xxiii.* p. 341.

till the local symptoms were so violent as to make her complain.

"Jane Hampson*, aged four, was admitted an out-patient of the (Manchester) Infirmary, Feb. 11, 1791. The female organs were highly inflamed, sore and painful; and it was stated by the mother, that the child was as well as usual till the preceding day, when she complained of pain in making water. This induced the mother to examine the parts affected, when she was surprised to find the appearances above described. The child had slept two or three nights in the same bed with a boy fourteen years old; and had complained that morning of having been hurt by him in the night.

"Leeches, and other external applications, together with appropriate internal remedies, were prescribed; but the debility increased, and on the 20th of February the child died. The coroner's inquest was taken, previously to which the body was inspected, and the abdominal and thoracic viscera were found to have been free from disease. The circumstances above related having been proved to the satisfaction of the jury, and being corroborated by the opinion I gave, that the child's death was occasioned by external violence, a verdict of murder was returned against the boy with whom she had slept. A warrant was therefore issued against the boy, but he had absconded, a circumstance which was considered as a confirmation of his guilt, when added to the circumstantial evidence alleged against him.

"Not many weeks however had elapsed, before similar cases occurred, in which there was no reason to suspect that external violence had been offered; and some in which it was absolutely certain, that no such injury could have taken place. A few of the patients died, though from the novelty and fatal tendency of the disease, more than common attention was paid to them. I was then convinced I had been mistaken in attributing Jane Hampson's death to external violence; and I informed the coroner of the reasons which produced this change of opinion. The testimony I gave was designedly made public, and the friends of the boy, hearing of it, prevailed upon him to surrender himself.

"When he was called to the bar at Lancaster, the judge informed the jury that the evidence adduced was not sufficient to convict him; that it would give rise to much indelicate discussion, if they proceeded on the trial; and that he hoped, therefore, they would acquit him without calling any witnesses. With this request the jury immediately complied."

The following is the result of the author's own practice.

"CASE I.—On January 22, 1815, I was desired to see Miss R. aged six years; she had complained three or four days of head-

* See Medical Ethics, by Dr. Percival. Note by Mr. Ward, of Manchester, page 231.

ache; had been chilly, and occasionally hot; she had been sickly, and taken little food; was dull, heavy, and languid. This morning she had complained of pain in making water: upon examination the pudendum was found inflamed; upon which I was called in.

"The inner surface of the left labium was ulcerated, as well as the clitoris; the right labium was inflamed, and the whole parts tumefied, of a dark purple hue, not unlike some kinds of erysipelas; the mons veneris was enlarged and inflamed; the perineum was inflamed and covered with aphthæ, which also encircled the anus, the discharge was thin, copious, and offensive, and had inflamed the top of the thigh; where it had been suffered to remain. The face had a peculiar paleness; the bowels were slow; the pulse quick and weak; the appetite diminished; the tongue of a dull clay colour. She was thirsty, complained of chilliness, and was indisposed for motion. The liquor plumbi acetatis dilutus was ordered as a lotion, to be applied lukewarm; and poultices made up with the same fluid were directed. A decoction of bark was also given with confectio cardiaca.

"By the use of these means, the enlargement of the parts gradually subsided, the foul bottom of the sores became red, after which the ointment of white lead was used, and the parts healed by the 14th of February, a space of seventeen days from the first attendance.

"In this case the affection again returned, but was early cured by resorting to the same remedies. The patient frequently retained the urine twenty-four hours, the pain was so violent, and obstinately resisted every inclination to empty the bowels, so that the opening remedies were obliged to be exhibited with a regular attention.

"CASE II.—On the 25th of April, 1815, I saw Miss S. aged five years and a half. She had been unwell a few days previous to the 21st, when complaining of pain in voiding the urine, the parts were examined and found slightly red; they were washed with milk and water, and dusted with the lapis calaminaris. On the 22d, the inflammation had increased, and the parts were slightly excoriated. On the 23d, a thick yellow discharge was observed, the patient was getting more unwell, the bowels were slow. On the 24th, the open surfaces were enlarging, and small watery vesicles appeared upon the labia and perineum; upon the left thigh also was a large cluster; the bowels were twice opened this day by some family purgative.

"On the 25th, I saw the patient, and found both labia enlarged, and of a purple redness, with numerous small watery vesicles, upon the external surface, and also within the fissura magna. They were similar to cowpock vesicles of the third and fourth day; were found also upon the perineum, and the top of the left thigh. In some places the tops of the vesications were loosened, and showed beneath a deep foul ulcer, particularly in the cluster upon the thigh, and on the anterior part of the labia. The parts

within the fissura magna were every where red and inflamed, and several small ulcers were found. The skin around the anus was painful and red; and the secretion was then copious and offensive. There was a dull headache, a quick and irritable pulse, a moist tongue, but bearing a clay-coloured deposit; the motions on the 24th, were dark-coloured and offensive; the patient was considerably weakened, and the face of a peculiar paleness. I advised saturnine lotions slightly warmed, and saturnine poultices without oil, to the parts, and gave small doses of pulv. rhei in a saline mixture every three hours.

"April 26.—Fresh vesications still appearing; and, when the tops of the earlier vesicles had come away, the parts beneath were deeply ulcerated. Several aphthæ were observed within the labia, upon the perineum, and around the anus. The skin was hot and dry; the bowels open, and motions dark and offensive; with excessive pain upon voiding the urine.

"27.—The top is thrown off from the cluster of vesicles upon the thigh, as well as from the vesications upon the pudendum and perineum; the open surfaces are deep and foul, secreting largely a thin and offensive matter; the anus surrounded with aphthæ; the pulse 120; skin hot and dry; bowels open, and urine excessively hot and painful. Ordered a decoction of bark, with conf. cardiaca; recommended a little red wine to the patient, and to continue the applications to the parts.

"28.—The bowels slow; the urine has been retained thirty hours; the abdomen tender and hard; with much difficulty she was prevailed upon to void the urine, which was copious, high-coloured, and of a strong smell: the aphthæ had almost disappeared, and the diseased parts shewed a large ulcer of various depths, extending over the pudendum and perineum, down to the anus; the parts within the labia were in the same state, and a deep ulcer, but not extensive, lay upon the left thigh, on its upper and inner part; the secretion is thin, copious, and offensive. These sores were ordered to be washed with the lotion as usual, and dressed with the white lead ointment. Continue the bark mixture, and increase the wine.

"29th and 30th.—The ulcerations were stationary; the same means were continued; but, as the bowels were slow, they were moved with an infusion of senna.

"May 1.—Sores improving; the bottom becoming less foul, and discharge less offensive; pulse 90 and weak; appetite poor; sits up a little; great inclination to retain the urine; bowels open. Continue the applications and remedies.

"2d.—The sores improving, as well as the strength. This state of improvement continued regularly, till the sores were healed on the 14th. After the healing, the pudendum continued discoloured and tender, and a considerable yellow mucous discharge continued with varying quantity for the space of six or eight weeks; this was relieved by a continued use of the tinct. lyttæ, bathing the parts frequently in the day with a solution of the sulphas zinci; the

shower-bath was also used with the intention of checking the secretion, as well as getting up the strength. I saw this patient on the 27th of June, when the discharge had ceased.

"Upon looking over my notes, I find that, in nine years, I have seen twelve cases; of these, I have only seen the two above related so early as to be materially serviceable; the others, being among the children of labourers, had little chance, either from the attention or punctuality of the parents, of getting over so very formidable a disease. One, a little girl of two years old, recovered, and was attacked again in the course of a fortnight, which second attack proved fatal. In a girl, five years of age, where the earlier appearances of the disease had been entirely overlooked, the mother upon finding an extensive ulcer, brought the child to me, under the idea of its having received injury from fire, which had escaped attention. The case proved fatal."

Thus, of twelve cases, ten were among the labouring poor. By what means these epidemics reach the rich, cannot always be ascertained, but probably the greater matter of surprise should be that it does not oftener occur. Among children, it is still more likely, as it is impossible to prevent nursery maids from introducing their little charges to their own relations, and even in infantile day-schools the gradations must sometimes intermix.