HISTORY
OF
A CASE OF
PREMATURE PUBERTY.

By JOHN FLINT SOUTH, Esq.

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THE subject of the following memoir, John Sparrow, was born Sept. 6, 1818, at Long Melford, in Suffolk. His parents are laboring people, and at the time of his birth were about twenty-seven years of age. The father is a thin, but healthy rustic ; the mother a dark little woman ; has borne four children, a girl and three boys, of which this child is the youngest but one.

The following account is obtained from the mother :—She says that her labours have always been tedious ; but that she had not a more difficult delivery with this child, though he was very large. At the time of his birth he was completely covered with hair, and the back of his head, particularly, with black hair, about the length usual to children of four or five months, extending towards the fore-

head, in the direction of the sagittal suture ; but not at all on the temples, or sides of the head. The nurse observed that the pudenda were much larger than usual, and the first impression on their mind was, that he was ruptured ; they were also particularly struck with the hoarse noise he made in crying, and his deep breathing when asleep, both which circumstances were frequently noticed by their neighbours. When he was about four months old, the hair on the pubes began to grow very quickly and black, at which time the penis increased in size, particularly the glans, so that it gradually extended beyond the prepuce, till about fifteen months, when it was entirely exposed, and the child had the appearance of having been circumcised ; the pubes were then completely covered with black curling hair. Up to this time the boy had been a fat robust child, he had cut nine teeth within the twelvemonth, without any irritation of the bowels, or convulsions, so common to children at this period, and it is a curious circumstance that he had cut the four incisores, and the two cuspidati of the upper jaw, before a single tooth had made its appearance through the lower jaw ; the whole set of teeth, however, were completed within two years from his birth. Before he was a twelvemonth old he could walk extremely well, but his size increased so fast, that at this time (fifteen months) his legs bowed and were unable to bear the superincumbent weight, so that he was obliged to be carried about in arms. His mother now

thought it time to wean him, as he could eat any thing that came in his way, and she accordingly did so. Soon after this, she noticed that his linen was stained two or three times in the week, when she had to dress him in the morning, and was then unconscious of the cause from whence it proceeded; but from his crying out whenever it occurred, as if hurt, and the circumstance of his being faint and pallid on the next morning, she was induced to watch him, and then ascertained the real cause, which, alarming her very much, she applied to her medical attendant, who recommended cold bathing of the whole body, three times a day, which she followed up till a few weeks before she came to town. The child's health became better, or rather he recovered flesh, for though he had got thinner, he had never lost his appetite, or had any other bodily ailment; the emissions were less frequent, rarely more than once a week; but she noticed that if he took more porter or beer than his usual allowance, he generally had an emission the same night; she also states that since the time he has been in town (six weeks) the emissions have been more frequent than for some time previously. Soon after weaning, light curling hair began to appear very fast on the temples and sides of his head, which had been before bare, and the black hair on the occiput and vertex falling off, was replaced by light hair, but not for a considerable time. She says that the fontanelles were very large, but soon closed; but that "down his forehead was so open

that you might lay your finger in it," (to use her own expression) "and also the sides of his head behind his ears," putting her fingers in the direction of the lambdoidal suture, and that these were not closed for a very long while, but she does not recollect how long. "His voice," she says, "was always gruff, and has become more so as he grew older, though not very much." He is very passionate, but his rage is soon over, and he is very anxious to be reconciled, if he thinks he has affronted his mother. When vexed he cries bitterly, the tears running down his cheeks in streams, as children usually do, but makes a very hoarse noise. He does not fail to be master when he plays with other children, and uses his fist with good effect, to obtain from them any object which may particularly strike his fancy.

Thus far his mother. The rest of the narrative has come under my own observation: I have had frequent opportunities of seeing him, both at the place where he resides, and at my own house, to which he has been several times; the result of which I shall now endeavour to lay before the Society, whose indulgence I must crave, should I not do that justice to him which his remarkable figure requires. I have, at a further part of this paper, given an exact measurement of almost the whole body.

When I first entered the room where he was, I

was much struck with the size and form of his head and neck. He has a fine high and spacious forehead; but the occiput is extremely prominent, from the enormous size of the cerebellum, which Drs. Gall and Spurzheim state is always the case when the genital organs are developed in a great degree. His countenance is that of a child of six or eight years old—puerile, but intelligent, with an archness of expression, and a pleasing smile, when he is in a good-humour. He has coarse light hair and eyebrows, with light hazel eyes, but expressive. There is no beard on the chin; but the upper lip is darkened with hair, such as is generally noticed in young persons of fifteen or sixteen, accompanied also with inspissation of the sebaceous matter about the alæ of the nose, usually observed at the same period. The neck is short and thick, but not inelegant; the anterior edge of the trapezius muscle forming a gentle curve from its origin to its insertion in the scapula and clavicle. The sterno-mastoid muscles are large, but not very prominent.

When his clothes are stripped off, the trunk presents the appearance of that of an adult, except that he is not so large across the shoulders as he is round the pelvis, the clavicles being, comparatively with the rest of his body, short. He has a large and ample chest, on which the pectorales are prominent. The nipples are small and dark. The abdomen is large and prominent; but neither is

this or the chest covered with much hair. The penis, scrotum, and testicles are as large as those of an adult: the prepuce being always drawn back, or perhaps, it may be said, not existing at all; the glans penis is constantly uncovered. The pubes and scrotum are covered with thick dark curling hair. The thighs are larger and muscular, but out of proportion, not being longer than the tibia and fibula, which bones are bowed forward; but, in addition to this, they also bow outwards, more particularly the left, their lower epiphyses having given way under the great weight they have to support; the feet are large and broad, but the arches of the tarsal bones are much impaired from the same cause. The arms are muscular, and the origins and insertions of the muscles admirably marked. The hands are large, and covered in the palm with rough hard skin.

But it is the posterior view of the trunk which presents, next to the parts of generation, the most remarkable appearance. The lumbar mass of muscles is enormous, and the trapezius, with the latissimus dorsi, are not a whit behind them; the muscles of the scapulæ are also very large and prominent. The spine is very erect; and from the nape of the neck to the pelvis, he is completely covered with hair, like a strong muscular man: in short, the back gives the idea of very great strength, which he possesses, as he can lift a half-hundred weight with one hand, with great ease, and will

drag an adult about on his rocking-horse, without much exertion.

His voice is very deep and hoarse, and he laughs loud and heartily ; but the larynx is not so much developed as might be expected, the thyroid cartilage being by no means prominent ; which, however, may perhaps be less noticed from the great size of his neck, which is very fat.

As to his disposition, from what I have observed, I have no doubt that his mother's statement is correct. When a stranger visits him, he is at first shy ; but, by the kind manner which children expect and so well know how to appreciate, any thing may be done with him, which I have myself witnessed when I measured him, and at the time when Mr. Silvester, one of our students, was so kind as to make a sketch of him for me ; which last took up full two hours at his first sitting, during which time he allowed himself to be put in any position we thought proper without the least opposition.

He is remarkably inquisitive, asking the name of every thing which is new to him, which he does not forget, as children generally do. But still his faculties are only those of a child, though his body is so completely evolved : he still acts from the impulse of the moment, without reflection on the consequence of his wishes. He is satisfied with the

common amusements of childhood, and can be amused for hours with a humming-top, or scribbling on a piece of paper ; whilst, on the other hand, if he be opposed in the most trivial thing, he will throw himself into a violent passion, chastise the offender, if it be in his power, or, if not, vent his indignation in a flood of tears.

He does not seem at all aware of his situation ; and, from what I can ascertain from his mother, has not the least inclination to play any tricks with himself. But it is remarkable, that whenever he has an emission in the night (now about once a week), and he is always waked by it, he calls out, ' Leave me alone ; do not pull me about ;' and will not go to sleep till his father goes to sit by him, when he immediately drops off.

He weighs 64 pounds avoirdupois.

ADMEASUREMENTS.

	Feet. In.	
Height	3	7
From the nasal process of the frontal bone across the vertex to the tubercle of the os occipitis....	1	2½
The circumference of the head above the orbits..	1	9½
From the transverse suture to the symphysis of the lower jaw	0	4½
From the angle of the same bone to its symphysis ——— tubercle of the os occipitis to the tip of the os coccygis.....	0	3½
	1	11½

	Feet.	In-
From the top of the trochanter major to the head of the tibia	0	8 $\frac{1}{2}$
From the head of the tibia to the outer malleolus ..	0	8
— inner malleolus to the sole of the foot..	0	2
— tuberosity of the os calcis to the tip of the great toe.....	0	7
Length of the clavicle.....	0	4 $\frac{5}{8}$
From the acromion to the olecranon.....	0	7 $\frac{5}{8}$
— olecranon to the tip of the styloid pro- cess of the ulna	0	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
From the styloid process to the tip of the middle finger	0	6
Length of the inner edge of the sterno-mastoid muscle.....	0	5 $\frac{3}{4}$
Circumference of the neck, opposite the thyroid cartilage	1	0 $\frac{1}{2}$
From the mastoid process to the point of the acromion.....	0	6 $\frac{3}{4}$
From the acromion to the same, before	0	11
—, behind.....	1	0 $\frac{1}{2}$
Round the thorax opposite the nipples.....	2	1
— scrobiculus cordis.....	2	0 $\frac{1}{2}$
— loins opposite the umbilicus	2	3
From the anterior superior spinous process of one ilium to the other, before	1	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
—, behind.....	1	3
From the anterior superior spinous process of the ilium to the symphysis pubis	0	6
Round the deltoid muscle.....	0	9
— biceps.....	0	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
— upper part of the fore arm.....	0	7 $\frac{3}{4}$
— wrist.....	0	6
— upper part of the thigh	1	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
— gastrocnemius at the calf.....	0	9

	Feet. In.	
Length of the penis, when pendent from the symphysis pubis.....	0	3
Circumference of ditto	0	3 $\frac{1}{8}$
Penis, scrotum, &c.....	0	7 $\frac{5}{8}$
Length of the penis, when erect.....	0	6
Circumference	0	4

Thus, then, I have finished the task which I had taken in hand, in which I do not pretend to any thing more than a plain matter-of-fact statement. The case is rare and curious; one only of the male sex having previously appeared before the Society, and published in the first volume of their Transactions. I am not satisfied, as Mr. White seems to have been with his case, "that the changes which took place in this boy had their origin in utero." And I am not quite decided as to the loss of flesh which this boy suffered, between the period of weaning and the emissions of semen; whether it was the effect of the child having its customary and natural food withheld, which we know frequently produces the most fatal consequences to children, or whether it was the precursor of those important changes which the body was immediately to undergo.

January 8, 1822.