NERVOUS AFFECTIONS,
PECULIAR TO YOUNG WOMEN,
CAUSING
CONTRACTION OF THE MUSCLES OF THE
EXTREMITIES,
ACCOMPANIED BY
INCREASE, DIMINUTION, OR ABSENCE OF SENSATION OR
MOTION.
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READ MAY 23RD, 1837.

WINIFRED Dowty, admitted 28 April 1832, aged 24, single, ill ten days, with pain in the head and over the inferior margin of the right lobe of the liver, to the extent of a crown piece; catamenia always scanty, and often absent; subject to leucorrhœa; has been leeches, bled, and blistered without any relief.

A few days after admission, a pain came on in the right groin, as the pain in the region of the liver diminished; a fortnight after, the pain had extended from the right groin to the hip and down the thigh to the inside of the knee, followed by inability to move the right leg, or sustain any weight on it, with pain also in the occiput, and one of the inguinal glands hard and painful, with difficulty and pain in making water.

Hitherto, the chief treatment has been leeching, cupping, and mustard poultices, with the cold shower-bath, but she is now, the 14th August, in a much worse and more helpless state than when admitted.

The treatment was now changed, and two needles introduced daily from the hip down the thigh, in the direction of the pain, which remained in for two hours; ten days after could move the right leg and bear some weight on it; soon after was able to turn the toes out; the needles were daily continued to the middle of September, a moxa was applied above the spine of the ilium, and soon after she left the hospital perfectly recovered.

Rebecca Webster, aged 24, transferred from the surgeons' wards 16th March, 1833, where she had been for a fortnight. A month ago was seized with a pain in the left side and back, with inability to walk, which have continued ever since; catamenia absent four months, bowels confined.

Now, the pain of the loins, groin and abdomen of the left side so severe as scarcely to be able to bear the slightest touch, but the pain greatest over the left hip joint; that in the knee only slight; lies on the right side with the left knee bent up.

She was cupped over the loins to 3xij, afterwards over the left hip joint to 3xv, with relief: had large, frequent, and active doses of purgatives, which were long continued, as the bowels were obstinately costive; along with which, for three weeks, had carbonate of iron in 3ij doses, thrice a day; two needles were introduced daily, from the hip downwards, for one inch

and a half in depth, and remained in for two hours. She had an attack of influenza, when the carbonate of iron was discontinued. While she was with us, she had three or four fits, which the nurse said were hysterical.

April 24.—Can walk well, goes into the garden every day; five days ago laid aside the crutches, after having used them only three days; discharged.

April 30.—Walked alone from the New Road yesterday, without either crutches or stick.

Louisa Charrington, aged 21, single, admitted 30th October, 1833; says she has been ill a week, with headache, cough, sore throat, pain in the left side of chest and short breath. Now, her complaints are the same, with sores about the mouth and face; catamenia scanty for some time past; bowels confined; great sensitiveness of the skin about the neck, chest, and abdomen; cough convulsive, like the barking of a dog; opens her mouth during inspiration, and closes it on expiration. Respiratory murmur heard all over the chest, as far as the cough permits examination.

A few days afterwards was unable to walk without assistance, which diminution of the voluntary power of inferior extremities continued till towards the last. At first she was freely purged, when the motions were dark and lumpy; enema assafoetidæ was given twice; tinctura lobeliæ inflatæ was given for the cough; afterwards the cold shower-bath was tried, when she fainted every morning after it, and shivering fits followed, which were succeeded by continual sickness

with frequent vomiting. The shower bath was omitted and hydrocyanic acid given to allay the vomiting and sickness.

December 13. Cough gone, only sick once a day, feels hungry, has the globus, cries, and complains of the headache, is flighty and sulky at times; suspicious of every one around her, cannot walk, and will not use crutches. We now returned to the cold shower bath daily, which, with the ferri carb. ʒs. and ferri tart. ʒs. thrice a day, was continued to the 11th January, when she was discharged well.

M. A., aged 23, removed from the surgeons' wards, 20th November, 1833, had been previously delivered in August, and has been ill ever since with constant pain in the inside of the loins, on the left side, also over the region of the pubis; lies with the right heel and leg drawn up under the left thigh; bowels confined; catamenia have not appeared since her confinement, sense of choking, with a bitter water rising in the mouth; pain in the loins increased by pressure; for the three weeks past, urine has been drawn off by a catheter. She had one warm bath at first; then the cold shower bath every morning, with two needles every day to the loins, for two hours; every second morning to have, jalap. ʒj calomel. pulv. zingiberis aā gr. v.; the same powder was afterwards required every morning, after which she had ʒj of carbonate of iron thrice a day;—at the end of three weeks the right heel and leg continued to be closely pressed to the left thigh; to prevent which, the emplastrum lyttæ cum euphorbio was ap-

plied to each of the parts in contact; the next day the empl. canth. was applied to the calf of the right leg; this caused a great discharge, of which she complained, as well as of the needles. The euphorbium plaster was afterwards applied to the calf of the leg, but during its discharge, she was excused taking the shower-bath; and when the parts healed, the double inclined plane was applied to the knee, the angle between the two planes being regulated by a screw; but this she found irksome, and soon learned to regulate the inclination of the planes at pleasure, by turning the screw. Occasionally, when suddenly alarmed, as upon the approach of her medical attendants, she vomited blood. She afterwards lost all feeling of the right toes when pinched; sometimes made water without the catheter, but the pain in the loins persisted; the leg, in six weeks from admission, by the aid of the screw, &c., was brought to an angle of 130° with the thigh.

January 27. Has been up every day for the last week, never has been dressed before since her illness; looks and general health greatly improved, leg nearly straight, continues the inclined plane in the nights, and walks with crutches in the days. Catamenia never appeared, vomited three ounces of blood to-day; a troublesome discharge from the vagina, with pain in the groin, hip, and knee of the right side. There was a revolt in the ward this morning, and I was obliged to let her be discharged, though reluctantly. She came to see me in April, walking quite well, and free from the least lameness.

Esther Brinfield, aged 20, single, came in on the 22d May, 1834. Ill a week, began with giddiness and violent pain in all the limbs; had shivering fits a few days ago, when she was insensible and knocked herself about; bowels and catamenia regular.

After she had been in a fortnight, paralysis of the inferior extremities came on; shortly after, she recovered the use of the right leg, but the left leg and thigh simulated all the symptoms of diseased hip.

When the paralysis came on, the cold shower bath was used, and continued till the 16th June, when she was discharged, having only a slight lameness of the left leg.

Cordelia Smith, a robust girl, aged about 20, was brought in a chair from the surgeons' wards the 15th December, 1835; a week ago fell on the back of her head, and has had pain there ever since, with frequent succussions of the whole frame; now lies in a state of torpor, bowels confined, catamenia regular.

The head was shaved, and a mustard poultice applied to the back of the head; afterwards the occiput was cupped to ℥xij , and fomented; and iodine ointment applied, hydr. cum cretâ gr. v. ter, and opening medicine.

Ten days after admission, she suffered severe and constant pain, with tumefaction about the occiput, shivering at times, and indistinct vision; keeps the eyes closed, feels soreness, on being touched, over all the body, with pain in the epigastrium, to which twelve leeches were applied with relief; the severe pain was not afterwards confined to the occiput, but extended over all the head, so that she could not bear

the ointment to be applied; on the 2d July, had a fit; the following day lay in a state of torpor, opening the mouth during inspiration and closing it on expiration, the head then not sensible on being touched.

January 25th. Vision continues indistinct, pain now confined to the right side of the head, and to the same half of the body; touching the hair causes soreness to the scalp; she evinces great sensibility to the slightest touch over the same entire half of the body, but the power of motion of the same side is diminished; a buzzing noise in the right ear; appetite good, but the same food sometimes tastes well, and at other times disagreeably.

The knee was still kept bent. The right knee to be stretched by the inclined screw plane; shower bath every morning; carbonate of iron 3jss. thrice a day; 2 needles for two hours every day; bowels were sometimes so obstinate that ext. of elaterium was given; moxa occasionally applied.

Feb. 26. For the last eleven days has entirely lost all sensation and motion of the right arm; two needles were passed into the arm, but she evinced no sensation when they were put in and taken out. Yesterday morning felt a great pain in the right shoulder, followed by a sense of numbness extending from the same shoulder to the finger nails; in the evening was able to bend the fingers but not the arm; head comparatively well, intelligence continues perfect; the right knee continues bent, and very sensitive to the touch. Some days afterwards she had another fit,

during which the right knee became straight, but when it was ended the right knee became bent again, and in some of the fits the knee could be placed in any position, as if nothing was the matter with it ; she continued for some time longer to have severe fits, struggling, moaning, and screaming by turns ; the respiration after them sometimes as high as 96. The most powerful remedy in the fits was the cold douche ; in one of these fits six women and the house surgeon all pressed upon her to restrain the convulsions ; two buckets of cold water were brought up, and an assistant standing on the bed with a jug full, allowed the contents gradually to fall over the face, breast, eyes, and particularly into the mouth when open ; this was repeated in the strongest fits.

Afterwards, when she was improving, she was made to stand for half an hour every day on the right leg, with her back to the wall, and a bedstead pressed against the bent knee to keep it straight, the left leg being raised on a chair ; the cold douche was applied in the bath every morning to the bent knee, and sometimes the shower bath afterwards to the whole body, after which she was made to walk, with assistance, along the ward, and sometimes, when she raised the right foot to bring it forwards, a kick was given to the heel, and thus it went much more forward than she intended or thought possible. Towards the evening, when tired and unable to walk more, she was seated upon a table, and a weight being tied to the right foot, she swung the leg back and forwards, thus giving motion to the stiff joint.

April 16. Going out to day, walks well, and is only lame towards the evenings ; has free use and sensation of the right arm, pains of the head entirely gone, some slight dimness of sight only remaining ; catamenia have all along been regular ; since she has regained the use of her limbs the fits have been more frequent, but less severe ; is very fat and in good health.

She shortly afterwards returned to see me, was very well, free from lameness, and had a situation behind the counter in a pastry-cook's shop.

Eliza Alston, aged 26, single, came in 29th November, 1835. Complains of pain and inability to move the right hip joint, which confines her to bed ; left the hospital a week ago, having been in for three months for the same complaint. Now has pains down the dorsal and lumbar vertebræ on pressure, but most pain along the dorsal ; great pain in the right hip and knee, which is much aggravated by the slightest percussion on the heel ; right leg an inch shorter than the left ; there is a tumour in the right hypochondriac region ; frequently vomits all ingesta ; catamenia regular.

She was cupped on the loins, and large enemata of oil of turpentine cleared the intestines, which were much loaded, and the tumour in the hypochondrium disappeared. One night, after an enema of four pints, containing two ounces of oil of turpentine, she fell asleep, and retained the whole injection till next morning, and no difficulty in making water followed.

Creosote and hydrocyanic acid were afterwards

given to allay the vomiting. As these symptoms subsided others appeared; at one time she lay on her back three days and nights motionless and speechless, with the eyes wide open and fixed immoveably on the ceiling, and nothing could turn the eyes in a different direction; the pupils were dilated and mouth open, which gave her a strange and unpleasant aspect, during which time she took no sustenance, excepting now and then a small portion of the fluids, which were put into her mouth, she swallowed; she passed nothing in bed; at stated times she was placed on the night-stool and there occasionally performed her wants.

At an early stage of this cataleptic or ecstatic state, she was seated at the bottom of a shower bath, but then only uttered some strange cries; again, when she had remained in that state for three days, she had cold water poured on her when in bed, which caused her to struggle and restored her to her senses when she said that she felt as if waking out of a sleep, and was conscious of nothing having passed, during the three days, till she felt the cold water being poured on her, though she had no recollection of having previously been in the shower bath.

Afterwards moxa and needles were applied; sometimes the needles were unscrewed from the handles and allowed to remain in all night; she was fat, lazy, and very difficult to manage, from having been so long in the hospital; she was made to walk with assistance round the ward, had the cold douche and shower bath, swung the leg with a weight to it; but

she found the most benefit, during the greatest part of the last six weeks, from being placed with her back to the wall, sustaining her whole weight on the lame leg, with the bedstead pressed against the knee; this was daily repeated for two hours at a time. She was able, before she left, to walk alone in the garden, without any support, and to put the heel to the ground, though still lame.

About a month ago, when she last called, she had a high heeled shoe and a crutch, which she had been using for some time; she was going to Margate to have the warm douche.

This the least satisfactory case that we have had, though there was more fear here, from the first, than in many others, that there might be some disease of the hip; and should it not be so, the lameness and contraction of the leg have been of long standing, which are against her. On the contrary, what may be regarded as favourable symptoms are, that she is highly hysterical, has much morbid sensibility, is in good health and fat, and has been able to walk alone since her first lameness*.

Sarah Hawkins, aged 21, single, admitted 17th September, 1833. Ill nine days; began with shiverings and violent pains from head to foot, which

* Since this paper was read I have again seen her; on her voyage to Margate, she suffered so much from sea-sickness, that while she was there nothing could be done with her, and she returned worse than when she went; but a few weeks after her return she was able to walk alone, without stick or crutch, pretty quickly, but unable to put the heel entirely to the ground.

came on after having travelled all night on the outside of a coach, when it was very wet.

Now complains of head-ache, and pain and swelling of the right knee, which is generally the most severe from eight to ten in the evening; some yellowness of the conjunctivæ; catamenia, generally about every third week.

She remained under my care for three weeks; was seen by the surgeons and removed to their wards, as it was supposed that there was some disease of the cartilages of the knee.

More than two years after, Feb. 9th, 1836, she was returned from the surgical wards, having, during the interval, been an in and out patient of the surgeons; but only once, for a short time, when at home, has she been able to set the foot on the ground.

For the last three months has not been able to relax the ham-strings, both of which have remained tense and hard, with much swelling of the right knee, and the sole of the foot turned upwards towards the face; general health good, catamenia every third week, but she is thin and hysterical, and has extensive tenderness along the spine.

A month ago, when in the surgical wards, she had a tepid shower bath; immediately convulsions came on, and the right thigh came up against the belly. In that state she would have remained, had not three women sat up with her for two days and one night, and, for a week afterwards, one person held the limb down, to prevent it from starting up again; after-

wards the leg was tied down to the bed with straps and rollers.

When she now came under my care, I placed her in a room alone, with a nurse to attend her, to prevent the excitement which might be caused by numerous spectators; the rollers and straps were abandoned; the leg was held as straight as could be permitted, and the cold douche uninterruptedly applied for a quarter of an hour: she then felt a violent pain in the leg and loins, the ham-strings began to relax, the leg to tremble, and very soon it fell down by its own weight. The limb was then well rubbed for twenty minutes; both the douche and the rubbing were continued twice a day for some days afterwards; on the fourth repetition, the foot assumed its natural position, which it has retained ever since: by pressing on the ham strings and knee, she was in some degree enabled to extend the leg.

A fortnight afterwards, she was enabled to walk with a crutch, and set the heel on the ground, with the toes turned outwards; but she has a dislocation of the joint of the great toe, of long standing, which, since her illness, has been very painful, so that she can bear no weight on it.

The last time she called, six weeks ago, said she had been able to walk across the room without a stick, but the knee-joint continued stiff.

Mary Ann Heard, aged 29, single, came in 28th of March, 1836. Ill three months with headache, lassitude, shortness of breath on going up

stairs, and palpitations; the left knee had been constantly bent for a fortnight, some time before admission; but she can now straighten it, yet the left leg is one inch shorter than the right. Complains most of pain in the left hip-joint, which formerly extended down to the inside of the knee and ankle; cannot bear any weight on the hip, and is confined to bed. Says she has been cupped three times over the hip; leeches applied every other day, for a long time; and blistered six times. She is now very pale, in a state of anæmia, has leucorrhœa; catamenia absent for two years; appetite bad; tenderness over the lumbar vertebræ.

When her strength was recruited, to which our treatment was first directed, the cold shower bath and needles were employed, and she ultimately took 3ij of the carbonate of iron and gr. v. of the hydriodate of potass thrice a day.

At the end of two months, she could walk very well with a high-heeled shoe; and having an opportunity of going to Margate, we urged her to embrace it.

During her stay at Margate, she had a powerful warm douche applied to the sound hip. Two months afterwards, on her return, she walked quite well, with a low-heeled shoe, and free from all lameness.

Johanna Donahue, aged 18, single, came in on the 25th October, 1836. Nine months ago fell on the left knee; for a month afterwards was able to walk alone, but not without much pain in the knee; then

she went into a public institution, where she remained six months, but obtained no benefit, and left it on crutches, which she has been using ever since.

There is now only slight swelling of the knee, but it is stiff and painful in attempting to move the joint; catamenia regular; she is stout and healthy. The crutches were taken from her on admission, and she was led about the ward, supported by others, who now and then, when she was in the act of raising the left foot, propelled it forward by a gentle kick: at other times, when tired by walking, she sat on a table and swung the left leg with a weight tied to it; at another time, when she became able to bear it, after the cold shower-bath, she was placed, for an hour, with her whole weight sustained by the lame leg, and her back to the wall, and a bedstead to the knee.

At the end of three weeks she left us, walking quite well and alone.

Having been, perhaps, already tedious in narrating the history and treatment of the preceding cases, I shall now be the more readily excused from attempting to reason on the causes of these nervous affections.

The ancients thought that the uterus wanders about the body, giving rise to all the varied symptoms so commonly classed under the name of hysteria. The moderns deny this, and say that the same train of affections are produced by the nerves of the uterus communicating with the sympathetic, and thence with all the

other nerves of the system :—now, either description will amuse, but neither will much enlighten us.

But let us revert to those circumstances which we may observe so commonly in the class of disease just related.

Often we find the patient attributing the cause of her lameness to some accident, as a fall, knock, or sprain, about the time of the lameness first being noticed : and it is very natural that she should do so, for patients are often as ready with a theory of cause and effect as medical men : the patient, however, often deceives herself, for she may become lame without having received any external injury of the parts affected.

Again, they will often, at first, complain of the harsh treatment ; and what is also remarkable, they will sometimes complain the most when the good effects of the treatment become visible, and do not seem to wish to be removed from that state, which ensures to them the attention and sympathy of those around.

But when you have by attention to all they have to say, and by kindness, accompanied by firmness, obtained a moral influence over them, which becomes a powerful agent when properly directed, they will often attend to your reasonings about their treatment, and aid you in fulfilling it ; and should there be, at that time, a marked improvement, their anxiety for recovery increases ; and though at first the treatment might have caused them much grief,

they now become grateful to you, and continue to have a great attachment to the wards, and to the nurses whom they have been under, and often return to pay them a visit after their recovery.

The facility with which this class of patients exercise a sympathetic influence over others is also remarkable; and even over the minds of nurses, who will be carried so far as to encourage them, by a ready attention, in their vagaries and fancies. Hence the nurses were of no use whatever in carrying into execution some parts of the treatment, and without the aid of the resident medical officers, a plan so troublesome, and continued for such a length of time as many of the cases required, could not have been executed.

In the cases related, the women were all young, generally in good health, and of strong constitutions: all of them were single, and many of them subject to violent hysterical fits. In the four most obstinate cases, the functions of the uterus were regular; in others, the bowels were confined, and in four of them obstinately.

Again, at times, some were seized with sudden and apparently alarming symptoms, as repeated hæmoptysis, most violent convulsive fits; others, on the contrary, had perfect paralysis of both sensation and motion; another lay motionless and speechless for three days: yet these symptoms only suspended, and never altered the treatment.

Lastly, I have preferred combining an outline of the treatment, with the history of each case, that

any one may the more readily adopt or reject what he may think proper, which he would not have been able so easily to do, had one general outline of treatment only been described ; which must be my apology for having occupied so much of the time of the Society.

It should have been stated, that the cases have been taken from the case-book, in the order in which they occurred, without any selection, except in omitting those of less severity, which, in general, much sooner terminated favourably.