CASES

OF

MEASLES,

OCCURRING OFTENER THAN ONCE IN THE SAME
INDIVIDUALS.

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MEASLES, like small-pox, hooping-cough, and scarlatina, being usually considered a disease by which a person is liable to be affected only once in the course of life, it is consequently believed by some medical practitioners, that an individual, who has already passed through a regular attack of measles, is thereby protected from ever having any return of a similar complaint.

To such an opinion, although correct in the great majority of cases, we nevertheless find several exceptions recorded in authors, whereby it appears that this eruptive disease may occasionally attack the same patient a second time, notwithstanding its previous occurrence ; and, as a well-marked instance of

the kind has recently come under my care, in addition to another and a still more rare example, which occurred two years ago, I think it may be interesting to detail them both, since the symptoms in each were most distinct, and strongly confirmative of the particular point just mentioned.

In order therefore to add to the evidence already possessed on the subject, I subjoin a short history of the two instances alluded to ; especially, as in one of them, the disease appeared, not only a second, but even a third time, in the same patient ; the symptoms being so unequivocally marked in every attack, that no doubt whatever was entertained, in either case, regarding the nature of the eruption, or the accompanying fever, which throughout exhibited all the ordinary characters of measles.

Having attended the patient whose case is first mentioned in the following pages, on both occasions when this eruptive disease supervened, it thus remains free from any doubt, which might perhaps have existed had the report of its previous appearance been only obtained at second hand ; but seeing there is no break in the chain of evidence, the proof becomes quite conclusive ; and although, in the second instance, the facts may not be so directly authenticated as in the former, they are nevertheless equally decisive, so that both cases seem of sufficient interest to be read in the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, where communications tending to the advancement of medical and surgical science, are always favourably received by the Fellows of this

learned Association ; and, if worthy of publication, recorded in their Transactions.

CASE I.

Master F. H., in the early part of 1837, being then two years old, had a regular attack of measles, along with his elder brother and a cousin, all then living in the same house. I attended him throughout the disease, which exhibited the usual and unequivocal symptoms of that complaint : the eruption was well marked, copious, and continued apparent on the skin for the ordinary period ; whilst the affection of the eyes, of the air passages, the cough, and the violence, as well as the duration of the febrile symptoms, placed the nature of his malady beyond any doubt ; from which however, in due time, my patient recovered completely, by ordinary antiphlogistic treatment.

On the 23rd of March last, that is, about two years after the first attack of measles, Master F. H. became restless and slightly feverish ; but it was only two days afterwards, or the 25th, when an eruption having appeared on his neck and face, the exact character of this patient's complaint remained no longer doubtful. He now had considerable fever, with quickness of pulse, along with the commonly remarked catarrhal symptoms, such as discharge from the nose, watery eyes, and slight cough ; he complained likewise of thirst, and he had a foul tongue. On the 26th the eruption continued copious on the arms, legs, and body, at the same

time appearing in clusters, slightly elevated, and quite characteristic of its nature ; the face, also, was now a little swelled, whilst the catarrhal affection remained ; and had any uncertainty yet existed, regarding the nature of this eruptive disease, it would have been entirely removed from the mind of the most sceptical observer by examining a case exhibiting, as this one did, so many well-marked symptoms. The eruption, on the 27th, became less evident ; and, by the evening of the 28th, it had almost disappeared, the patient being otherwise much better. On the 29th, Master F. H. was nearly convalescent ; and, by the 31st of March, he got quite well.

The object proposed, in this communication, being to narrate only such circumstances as would fully establish the fact that measles had occurred a second time in the same person, it appears to be superfluous to particularize the remedies employed in the cure of so well known a disease. I may, however, briefly state, that the treatment pursued consisted almost wholly in active purging, diluents, and the strictest antiphlogistic regimen ; which proved, as in the former attack, successful, the patient having been in due time restored to health by its adoption.

CASE II.

In the spring of 1837 I attended Miss S——, aged fifteen, who then had measles, according to report, for the third time, and which then assumed

rather a severe form ; other members of the family being likewise affected with the same complaint. During this attack, the eruption was very copious, appearing all over the body, and clearly indicated its specific character ; the other symptoms being equally well marked and decisive as to the nature of the disease : whilst the cough, and affection of the chest, were so violent as to require the application of leeches ; and I may add, that a more severe or unequivocal instance of measles, than the case thus briefly mentioned, has seldom come under my observation, or which passed so regularly through every stage of that well known complaint. However, in due time, the patient recovered ; the treatment adopted being of the same antiphlogistic character which was followed in the previous case : such indeed as, according to my experience, ought generally to be pursued in this acute and often inflammatory complaint.

The parents of this young lady stated, in answer to inquiries made purposely, that she had already, on two occasions, passed through the measles in a perfect and regular form : first, at Madras, in 1826, when four years old ; secondly, at Blois, in 1832, or about six years afterwards ; whilst the third attack of this disease occurred after an interval again of nearly six years ; when, as already stated, Miss S—— came under my care.

In the two previous attacks of measles, neither of the physicians in attendance expressed any doubt regarding the nature of the eruptive disease affecting

their patient ; and both the parents, besides the governess, who however, it should be stated, only saw Miss S—— at Blois and in London, concurred in opinion that the eruption and other symptoms were so characteristic and similar in their appearance, as to remove from their minds all uncertainty in respect of identity with the previous attack. To my mind, also, the proofs adduced were quite conclusive on the subject ; and they amply confirm the views entertained by those authors who, along with myself, consider that measles, although a disease likely to affect an individual only once in the course of life, it may nevertheless recur a second or even a third time in the same person ; and on each occasion exhibit all the ordinary pathognomic symptoms, as distinctly as they appeared in the two examples I have now recorded.

Since the preceding paper was read to the Society, my friend, Dr. Forbes, of Argyle Street, having mentioned, in conversation, that he had met with a case similar to those now briefly detailed, I would beg leave to transcribe the note which he kindly wrote at my request ; more especially, as the valuable evidence thus collaterally supplied by Dr. Forbes, amply confirms the particular point I have endeavoured to substantiate in that communication. It is dated June 1st, 1839.

“ About four years ago I was sent for to visit Lord ——, aged ten, at Eton, whom I found suffering from measles. The attack was slight, but distinctly marked, as well by the character of the

eruption, as by the concomitant catarrhal symptoms.

“ The elder brother, who was residing in the same house, escaped the infection. Lord —— had parted from his parents, only a few days before, on their leaving London for Paris, with their two daughters. I wrote to inform the mother of the occurrence, with my opinion, that the infection had been received in London, as the measles were not known to prevail at that time in Eton.

“ The mother replied, in answer to my letter, that she was of the same opinion, since she was attacked with measles on her arrival at Calais ; and the oldest daughter, also, on her arrival at Paris. The younger sister did not receive the infection.

“ Upwards of four years afterwards, that is, within the last fortnight, I was desired to visit the same boy, in consequence of an eruption on the skin, which had appeared, first on the forehead, and gradually extended itself over the body and the extremities.

“ The eruption on the face was copious ; the catarrhal symptoms severe ; the eyelids swollen ; the eyes suffused, and morbidly sensible to light ; with a copious secretion from the nose, hoarseness, and a dry cough : the eruption has declined, having left a slight discolouration of the skin.”

In a postscript of the 5th June, Dr. Forbes adds, “ I have just been informed that five boys, in the same house in which Lord —— was confined with

the measles, are now laid up with the same complaint."

After these conclusive examples, so fully supporting the opinion that measles may supervene a second or even a third time in the same individual, it appears almost superfluous to bring forward any additional proofs on that point ; but if the present paper should obtain a place in the Society's Transactions, the facts it contains will both speak for themselves, and be appreciated, I hope, as they may deserve.