CLINICAL REMARKS

ON

TWO HUNDRED AND SIX CASES OF
TAPE WORM.

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DURING the period of twenty years, 206 patients affected with tape-worm were admitted into the clinical wards of Dr. Wawruch: of these 71 were males, 135 females. The oldest patient was fifty-four; the youngest three and a half years old; the greater number ranged between the ages of fifteen and forty. On the predisposing causes of tape-worm, the author is able to throw little or no light. A great majority of the patients came from a particular district, and diseases of the abdominal or dermal systems in early life, seemed to have some influence. Thus, 43 patients suffered under ague; 20 under gastro-intestinal disease; 16 under typhus; 10 from herpes; 41 from tinea capitis; 42 from itch; 8 from scarlatina; 13 from measles; 2 from chronic nettle-rash.

In the female sex, the author remarks that the presence of these worms was almost always accompanied by some derangement or anomaly of the menstrual secretion, generally consisting in a late appearance of the discharge.

Symptoms.—Some patients suffered very little, and were unaware of their being affected until a portion of the worm was discharged; in other cases the symptoms were better marked; those constantly observed were,

1. A dull pain in the forehead, with vertigo, and ringing in the ears.

2. Troubled sight, with a bluish circle round the eyes; œdema of the upper eye-lid; dilated pupil; rolling of the eye-balls; various disturbances of vision, as double vision, muscæ volitantes, &c.

3. Frequent changes of colour; loss of appetite, interchanging with voracious hunger; and a taste for certain substances.

4. Foul breath; earthy taste in the mouth; salivation; nausea and vomiting of a watery fluid towards morning.

5. Itching of the nose, anus, or vagina; grinding of the teeth, particularly during sleep.

6. Enlargement of the abdomen; rumbling of the bowels; a pinching, biting feel about the navel, with the sense of a foreign body moving in the intestines, especially towards morning; disappearance of these symptoms on taking warm broth, &c.; diarrhœa interchanging with constipation.

7. When the disease is of long standing, melancholy, and a great number of nervous derangements; loss of some sense, partial or general convulsions, epilepsy, chorea, &c.

8. The most certain sign is the discharge of a portion of the worm, which may occur without any evident cause; occurs during some disease, as typhus fever, &c.; or be the effect of remedies.

Treatment.—The same method of treatment was adopted in all the 206 cases, except where the constitution of the patient, or some other particular circumstance, rendered a modification necessary.

As a preparatory step, all the patients took a laxative decoction with sal ammoniac, for three, four, or five days, and ate nothing but weak soup

thrice a day. In eight cases the worm was expelled by the mere effect of continued abstinence. The anthelmintic remedies employed were, castor oil, and the powdered root of the male fern. From one to two table-spoonfuls of the oil were given as a dose, alternately with one or two drachms of the powder twice or thrice a day.

Enemata of oil and milk were frequently thrown up, to attract the worm towards the large intestine, and it was observed that the effect of the drastic was always most sure when given a certain time after the last dose of fern, than at once. The drastic purge employed was composed of equal parts of calomel, gamboge, and sugar, two to eight grains of each for a dose. In many cases a single dose brought the worm away, but, in others, three to six doses were required. The period at which the worm was discharged was very various. In eight cases, as has been already remarked, it was expelled by the mere effect of hunger; in 13 cases, by the anthelmintics alone; in 11 by the first, in 14 by the second, and in 15 cases by the third drastic purge; and, generally speaking, it was expelled within one to twelve hours after the last drastic. In a few cases, two, three, four, (and in one) twelve days elapsed after the last purge, before the worm was expelled. The tænia is not exclusively a solitary worm, for in nine cases there were two worms, of different ages and development; in two cases three worms. In one very remarkable case, four worms were discharged, and this patient still suffers from the complaint. Of the 206 cases, only 26 had a relapse; twenty of these came twice, five thrice, and one of them four times to the hospital. Some came in two to four months; two in nine months; two in a year. Generally speaking, the patient may expect to be entirely freed from his disease, if he pass ten or twelve weeks without discharging any remnants of the worm.

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At the present crisis of public affairs we are not very sanguine in the expectation that the claims of the medical profession will, or indeed can, meet with due attention. The interference of the legislature in respect to these claims can only be looked for when the direct bearing of the evils complained of, to the injury of the public, shall have been clearly made out. Perhaps the time, which must necessarily intervene before the settlement of questions of general politics can possibly take place, can scarcely be more profitably employed than in the endeavour fully to ascertain the extent of the existing evils, to indicate the remedial measures necessary for repressing them, and in again