

DISEASES OF CHILDREN.

Convulsions in Children.

It often puzzles us to readily explain the cause of one of the most common symptoms we are called to treat.

We have been in the habit of keeping in our mind a table somewhat after the nature of the following, and knowing what time and trouble it has in many instances saved us, we present it in the hope that some of our brother practitioners may find in it some useful hints. We must remember that convulsions in children very often, if not usually, take the place of a chill or delirium in the adult, so that the convulsion may be but the onset of one of the exanthematous fevers, etc. Amongst the commonest causes are :

1. *Indigestion*, or severe gastric disturbance, from the presence of some irritant or trash which the child has been eating.—Remedy : Emetics. The best is a hypodermic injection of apomorphine 1-25 to 1-10 grs.

2. *Constipation*, or intestinal obstruction of any kind. The convulsions are due, in all probability, to the absorption of leucomaines. Enema, and then castor oil, or castor oil and rhubarb.

3. *Intestinal irritation*, from worms, or lodging of some foreign substance in canal, such as plum or cherry pits, etc. Remove cause. For worms, santonine about the best.

4. *Fright and passion* are often a cause. Bromides and chloral for several hours to soothe and lessen the tendency.

5. *Foreign bodies* in the nose, ears, and other passages. This is a very common cause, as children have an inveterate habit of stuffing pieces of stick, beans, bugs, and all sorts of things into these parts. The convulsion in this case is often as much due to fright as to irritation. Thorough and careful examination, as in all other ailments in children, is the only method of discovering the cause.

6. *Pain*.—Opium in the form of solution of morphine. It is preferable to give it in this way, because it is more readily absorbed, whereas in other forms, especially in powder, two or three doses may lie in the stomach and then be all suddenly taken into the system, poisoning the patient.

7. *Uræmia*, etc., from retention of the urine caused by contracted prepuce, stone in the bladder, etc., or from acute kidney disease. In retention draw

off urine with catheter ; for this purpose the children's catheter invented by Dr. Ripley, of New York, is the best. In case of kidney disease, promote action through the skin by vapor bath, and hypodermic of $\frac{1}{8}$ gr. pilocarpine, more or less according to age.

8. *Insolation* (sun stroke).— Ice pack to the head, and every means to reduce temperature.

9. *Meningitis*.— The only hope of saving the child with this affection is to recognise it early. The commencement is slow and generally marked by a greater variety of symptoms than any other disease.

In order to arrive at a correct diagnosis, we find it necessary to make frequent visits and careful examinations, as, once the convulsions have appeared, the prognosis is very unfavorable. In the majority of instances our diagnosis is one of exclusion. The general restlessness and irritability of temper, the vomiting and constipation are the most constant symptoms ; but no two cases are alike in the early stages. Bromide and iodide of potash in large doses. Bathe the feet in hot water and mustard ; 1 to 2 drms. to 2 qts. water, at night or through the day as it very often has a soothing effect. In the stage of inflammation our object is to keep it down as much as possible, by applying cold to the head and a blister of cantharidal collodion behind each ear ; if the bromide is not sufficient to quiet restlessness, give chloral. The constipation is easily removed by purgatives. The strength must be kept up by nutritious diet.

10. *Cerebro-spinal Fever* is to be distinguished from other forms of meningitis by its sudden onset. The attack usually comes on between midday and midnight. The child goes to school in the morning all right, and comes home in the afternoon with headache, vomiting, high fever, convulsions, followed by stupor. The only disease likely to be confounded with it is scarlet fever. This can be distinguished by examination of the fauces, which will be red and inflamed in the commencement of scarlet fever. Ice bags to the head and nucha are required as long as no chilliness is complained of. Occasional hot mustard baths to feet. Pot. brom. internally ; also ergot may be given. The strength must be kept up. When hyperæmia is reduced alcoholic stimulants may be given.

11. *Anæmia of the brain*, as the result of exhausting diarrhoea. Give stimulants. The quickest is a hypodermic of ether ; afterwards, for the poor, malt