

all important. This applies to every manifestation of tubercular disease, and not less to disease in the joints than in other parts of the body. The reason that we see so many cases requiring resection or even amputation is an imperfect diagnosis in the early stage. And the imperfect diagnosis, I am sorry to say, is oftener the result of want of care than of want of knowledge. Be thorough, be careful, and strive always to make an early diagnosis.

Now, is diagnosis easy in the first stage? To the careful, yes: to the careless, no. The symptoms are not prominent, the disease is insidious in its onset, and frequently it becomes fully established and part of the joint is affected before the patient shews any severe symptoms. In fact, the symptoms are often so slight in the beginning that many—perhaps the majority—of the cases do not seek advice for six or eight weeks after the disease is established.

When the child is brought to the surgeon, inquiry will usually elicit the information that the mother has noticed the child to appear, at times, unwell. There may have been no complaint of pain, but very likely a limp may have been occasionally observed. This limp is most likely to be detected towards the end of the day. It is usually absent after the night's rest, and it may not be present every day. Some days the child may walk well, while on other days it manifests a distinct limp or halt. As yet there will probably be no particular pain and no uneasiness. The mother usually finds an explanation for the symptoms in some slight injury which the child sustained a short time before, and she expects that the stiffness and soreness of her child will wear away ere long. Not until she has waited for what she considers a reasonable time, and sees no improvement, does she seek the aid of the surgeon.

It is probable that the exciting or determining cause of a tubercular arthritis is very often trauma, which may, to appearances, be but slight. And unfortunately it is by no means unusual to refer the pain, or the soreness, or the stiffness of commencing joint disease to the slight injury from which the commencement of the trouble is so frequently dated. Not suspecting the gravity of the case, the mother applies domestic remedies and puts the child to bed. And, adding to the deceptiveness of the condition, a day or two of rest is often followed by a marked remission in the symptoms, and perhaps for ten days or a fortnight the child may appear quite well. Then, after a hard day's play, the pain returns, with the halting step and the stiffness. So the symptoms back and fill for four, or five, or six weeks, until the child is finally brought to the surgeon.