

PREMONITORY SYMPTOMS OF FAILURE OF THE HEART IN DIPHTHERIA.*

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It has been my fortune, or misfortune, to have seen a number of deaths from the condition called "heart failure" during or following attacks of diphtheria. In, I think, every case there occurred, at longer or shorter periods before death, a group of symptoms which may admit of an anatomical explanation, and which appear to me to bear a definite relation to the cardiac condition, the whole forming a pathological and clinical entity.

It is quite possible that I am about to describe a group of symptoms familiar to you all; if so, I can still take consolation from the fact that the literature on the subject is, with the exception of one or two instances, so far as I have been able to find, very indefinite and unsatisfactory.

This complication usually arises during the second or third week of the disease, but may be met with much earlier or be delayed for a month or more.

Some patients, it is said, die suddenly and without warning, usually during some exertion or excitement, but in the majority of cases, if not in all, there are premonitions which may precede the fatal issue for times varying from hours, to days or even weeks.

Most authors in recording the subjective and objective signs do not associate them in such a way as to present a symptom complex, but rather as isolated facts, without indicating their relation to or dependence upon one another.

The first indication of the approaching trouble is, almost invariably, *abdominal pain*, usually in the epigastric region, but occasionally first referred to the region of the umbilicus.

The pain is of moderate severity, though usually sufficient to make a child cry out. At times it may be so slight as to pass almost unnoticed, while in some cases it is very intense, requiring good doses of morphia for its relief.

In one case, in a child of 14 years, the pain extended to the precordia and radiated to the left shoulder and arm, as in *angina pectoris*.

Though generally pale and depressed during the attack of pain, the child may appear quite itself in the intervals.

Occurring with the pain, or more frequently beginning a few hours after its incidence and continuing at intervals till death, there is vomiting.

* Read at meeting of Toronto Clinical Society.