

Special Selections

UPON THE BACTERIOLOGY OF PROGRESSIVE CIRRHOSIS OF THE LIVER.*

By J. G. ADAMI, M.A., M.D., F.R.S.E.,

Professor of Pathology, McGill University, and Pathologist to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal.

It is needless for me here to enter into a discussion of the various theories which have been adduced to explain the development of cirrhosis of the liver. I need only say that the experience of a large number of observers, who for weeks and months have inoculated and treated animals with various alcohols has shown that alcohol itself induces at most the fatty liver, it may be, a very slight amount of fibroid change in the portal areas, and that not a single observer has by this means been able to produce anything at all resembling the extreme deposit of fibrous tissue which we meet with in the hobnailed liver.

Alcohol in the main leads to the fatty liver, while on the other hand the evidence has steadily accumulated, notably in India, that extreme cirrhosis may attack children and adults who have not taken a particle of alcohol either medicinally or otherwise.

Within the last few years, the French school of pathologists headed by Hanot, has regarded the enlarged cirrhotic liver with jaundice as being of infectious origin, and it is common in France, nowadays, to speak of "*le foie infectieux*," but to the best of my knowledge no one has as yet described any one micro-organism as being found frequently associated with these cases of so-called infectious liver. At most, Levi† from a case of cirrhosis in a

seventeen-year-old male, with marked periportal fibrosis and enlarged spleen, obtained a diplococcus pathogenic for guinea-pigs. The age of the patient, the proliferation of the bile ducts and the absence of ascites, would indicate that his case was one of what is termed "Hanot's Cirrhosis," but the bacteriology is rendered somewhat doubtful in that there were also present bacterial endocarditis of the pulmonary valve and suppurative meningitis. Unfortunately I have not been able to obtain the original paper, nevertheless, this brief statement of the main features of the case makes it at least possible, as Paltauf has urged, that the endocarditis and meningitis and the presence of diplococci in all the organs, may have been due to a complication.

On the other hand there is a somewhat suggestive relationship between these cases of Hanot's cirrhosis and epidemic jaundice, in some cases of which observers have noticed the presence of a diplococcus or bacillus with polar staining.

To the best of my knowledge, no one has as yet recognized the frequent presence of any one form of micro-organism in the commonest form of hepatic cirrhosis—the so-called portal cirrhosis, tending to the production of the hobnailed liver, with or without marked atrophy of the liver.

On behalf of the Government of the Dominion, I spent the summer of 1894 and 1895 in Nova Scotia investigating a very remarkable disease affecting the cattle in a limited area of the country—the so-called "Pictou cattle disease"—of which the main lesion is a singularly extensive cirrho-

* A paper read for the author by Professor Osler, in the Section of Medicine, at the meeting of the British Medical Association at Edinburgh, July, 1898.

† Arch. Gen. de Med., March and April, 1894.