

in a shanty on the rocks in the upper part of the city, and it was impossible to keep the child either well supported or well fed ; so that after a while the abscess began to increase again, and finally after about a year and a half, it discharged by a spontaneous opening. Following the views of the writers whom I had consulted, I had condemned Dr. Van Buren's procedure, and looked forward with complacency to the results of non-interference. My complacency did not last, but the abscess did. I followed the case for six years, and when I last saw him, he was a most miserable object to behold. The abscess was still discharging.

In the meantime other cases with abscess had presented themselves, and I had found that where there was a tolerable constitution, and the abscess had not been of long standing, it would disappear by absorption in a few weeks or months after support to the spine was applied. Here was a great point gained. And all my subsequent experience has had the same uniform result, and that is, that the majority of the lumbar and psoas abscesses in the first stages, will disappear after the spine is properly supported. And if no abscess exists, the danger of one is reduced to the minimum, when the diseased vertebræ are allowed to repair themselves by the use of the spinal assistant.

Hence, my first proposition is this : The first step in the treatment of lumbar or psoas abscess is to treat their cause in the spinal column. The abscess is but a symptom after all. It is idle to address our treatment to a mere symptom without first applying the appropriate remedy to the source of the trouble.

In the cases under consideration, the source of the visible abscess lies in the bodies of the spinal vertebræ. The larger proportion of diseases of the spine arise directly from falls, blows and the like traumatic causes. It is first, a simple inflammation, and at that stage, is as amenable to treatment as inflammation in any other part, and like all other inflammations, only requires rest, given perfect, absolute rest, and it will subside. And even when this inflammation, at first simple and healthy, as in any other part, is allowed to degenerate into caries, and the matter there formed escapes into a reservoir called the abscess, the indications are still the same ; to relieve the diseased vertebræ from pressure and motion ; and recovery though less perfect and more tardy, will yet take place. But, I repeat, so long as the disease in the spine, where the abscess has its origin, is not attended to, it were idle to talk of a treatment for one of its symptoms or effects. In regard to the preventing of abscess by relieving the disease in the bodies of the vertebræ, I

am able to speak with emphasis. On examining our records, I find that out of one hundred and eighty-three private cases, there were but three cases of abscess occurring after treatment for disease of the spine had commenced. In all other instances, the abscess existed when the patient was brought to me for treatment for disease of the spine. I have already stated that in some cases, an abscess will disappear, if treatment of the spine is commenced in the earlier stages of the disease. This is more often true, if, instead of an abscess visibly approaching the surface, there exists only the incipient symptoms of the formation of an abscess. These symptoms are very easily distinguished. While the disease is a simple inflammation of the bodies of the vertebræ, sufficient support invariably gives instantaneous relief to the gastralgia, which is the prominent symptom in the early stages of disease of the spine. But if we do not get then complete relief, I am always led to suppose that the destruction of the bodies of the vertebræ has commenced, and that there is caries, and of course the material for a lumbar or psoas abscess. Support will still give partial relief ; but it is not till after a certain length of time has elapsed, and disintegration of bone has ceased, that the patient realizes the complete exemption from the suffering, which so rapidly follows efficient support to the diseased vertebræ in the earlier stage. Sometimes in such cases, the abscess may appear near the surface after a while and then pass away ; but in most cases we never see the abscess—the pus does not approach the surface—but disappears by absorption at its source, and with it the suffering incident to its formation. In disease of the lumbar and several of the lower dorsal vertebræ, contraction of the psoas muscle is a sure indication of the early stage of psoas abscess, and if no treatment were applied to the source of the trouble in the spinal column, an abscess surely in due time makes its appearance. But this symptom, which is present in a very large number of cases, in all but two instances out of one hundred and eighty-three cases, passed away without a visible abscess.

CASE II illustrates several important points in this connection.

A. B. had disease of the spine at twenty months old, at which time her treatment commenced. Though she was a delicate child, as her parents were in good circumstances, and there appeared to be no struma in the family, and the disease was in the first stage, I had hopes of a speedy cure : that is restoration of form and function of the spine, as sometimes happens in young children under the most favorable circumstances ; but I found difficul-