



EDUCATION.

Condition of the Brain in Early Life—Effect on the Mind—Of Excitement and Enlargement of the Brain by Disease—Mental Precocity Usual in a Symptom of Disease.

[FOR THE POST AND TRUE WITNESS.]

At first, since no organ is fully developed and prepared for the powerful exertion of its appropriate action, or as it is technically called, function, let us inquire at what time of life nature has prepared the brain for the performance of the important office of manifesting the mind.

Let us begin with the infant and ascertain what is the condition of the brain in early life.

The brain of a new-born infant weighs about ten ounces; that of an adult, generally, three pounds and a half, frequently a little less.

But if the mind of an adult has been engaged in constant study, his brain is usually increased beyond this weight. The brain of Byron, for instance, although he had an extremely small head, is said to have weighed four pounds and a half, and that of the illustrious Cuvier four pounds thirteen ounces and a half.

The size of this organ increases from the time of birth till manhood; remains stationary from this period until old age, and then diminishes in bulk and weight.

Great differences of opinion exist with regard to the period at which the brain attains its full size. According to the ablest physiological writers, this does not happen till between the twentieth and thirtieth year.

While Sir William Hamilton and the Wenzels maintain that it occurs at the age of seven. This latter view seems an almost incredible assertion, but goes to prove the adage that "doctors differ."

The relative size of its different portions constantly varies during several of the first years of life, and it is not until about the seventh year that all its parts are formed.

During childhood it is "very soft and even almost liquid under the finger, and its different parts cannot be clearly distinguished." (Richet.) Still at this time it is supplied with more blood, in proportion to its size, than at any subsequent period.

It then grows most rapidly and more rapidly than any other organ; its weight is nearly doubled at the end of the first six months; and hence the nervous system, being connected with the brain, is early developed, and becomes the predominating system in youth.

At this period of life, however, which is devoted to the increase of the body, it is necessary that the nervous system should predominate; for this system is the source of all vital movement, and presides over and gives energy to those actions which tend to the growth of the organization. Besides, "Infancy," says Richet, "is the age of sensation. As everything is new to the infant, everything attracts its eyes, ears, nostrils, &c. That which to us is an object of indifference, is to it a source of pleasure. It is then necessary that the nervous cerebral system should be adapted by its early development to the degree of action which it is then to have."

It is during the earliest period of life that the child acquires an astonishing degree of knowledge; intuitively of course; his senses by degrees open to him the exterior world, and teach him how to act upon the surrounding bodies; his intellect is unremittingly active; thus we remark that at this stage of life the anterior part of the brain acquires a considerable degree of development. But if at this age the mind is remarkable for its aptitude and activity, it is true that the circle of ideas would be extended without order and much profit, if education, or what we may here very properly term "Object Lessons," did not give them a useful impulse by submitting them in a successive order to the different actions of the intellect, to compare, reflection, reasoning judgment, &c. Man is readily modified or moulded in his early infancy, when his organs have not had time to contract habit, when they have received transient impressions only, and when they await in some measure the impulse of a director.

But this great and early development, though necessary for the above purposes, very much increases the liability to disease: it gives a tendency to convulsions and to inflammation of the brain, and to other diseases of the nervous system, which are most common and fatal in childhood.

It is, therefore, deeply important that the natural action of the nervous system should not be much increased, either by too much exercise of the mind, or by too strong excitement of the feelings, lest at the same time the liability of children to the nervous diseases be increased, and such a predominance given to this system as to make it always excited, and disposed to sympathize with disorder in any part of the body: thus generating a predisposition to depression of spirits, or, as it is technically called, hypochondriasis and numerous afflicting nervous affections.

Mental excitement, as has been shown in a former letter, increases the flow of blood to the head, and augments the size and power of the brain, just as exercise of the limbs enlarges and strengthens the muscles of the limbs exercised. The wonderful powers of mind which an infant or child sometimes manifests, and by which he surpasses ordinary children, do not arise from better capacity in the mind itself of the child, but from a greater enlargement than usual of some portion or the whole of the brain, by which the mind is sooner enabled to manifest its powers. This enlargement takes place whether the mental precocity arises from too early and frequent exercise of the mind or from disease, and it must arise in one of these two ways. "In my opinion," says Brigham,

"mental precocity is generally a symptom of disease, and hence those who exhibit it very frequently die young." George Appoll and the Infant Lyra are cases in point. Both the Infant Lyra are cases in point. Both the Infant Lyra are cases in point.

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the piano, while a mere boy, in a style worthy of the great masters, and the latter, at an equally early age, displaying powers hardly inferior to the harp. The heads of both were unusually large for their age—the intellectual compartment of the brain splendid, and the organ of time very finely developed. As in the case of all prodigies, their brains were overworked, bad health ensued, and death was the consequence, at a period when they had not yet emerged from early boyhood and girlhood. "I am very well acquainted with another youthful musical genius," says Dr. Robert Macbride, "quite as wonderful as George Appoll and the Infant Lyra, Giulio Ricordi, the celebrated gittarist. The brain of this boy is very large, and its configuration of the noblest description, whether considered in a moral or intellectual point of view; but it has been too much wrought, and if he survives boyhood, as from the strength of his constitution he has every chance of doing, I am apprehensive that his mental powers will be found to have suffered by his early over-exertion, and that, as a man, he may be no way remarkable for genius. Still it is possible that he may prove an exception to the general rule, as was the case with Mozart, who exhibited great musical talent and general power of mind at an equally early age, and retained them unimpaired till the last moment of his splendid career." Those of my readers interested in these letters will find in the seventh volume of the *Phrenological Journal*, page 14, a very interesting case of a precocious child, who died, as usual, at an early age, together with some practical remarks upon it by the editor of that periodical. Dr. Combe treats of the errors of parents and teachers, in such cases, in the eighth chapter of his admirable work, "The Principles of Physiology applied to the Preservation of Health and the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education." This is one of the best works on the subject of health ever published, and ought to be in the hands of all parents and teachers. That mental precocity is generally a symptom of disease ought to be specially remembered by parents and teachers, most of whom regard precocity, unless accompanied by visible disease, as a most gratifying indication; and, on account of it, unduly task the memory and intellect of the child. "During childhood, as well as in infancy, the regulation of the vegetative functions ought to be the most important point of education. A good and healthy organization is the basis of all employment and of all enjoyment. Many parents, however, are anxious to cultivate the mind at the expense of the body. They think they cannot instruct their offspring early enough to read and write, whilst their bodily constitution and health are overlooked. Children are shut up, forced to sit quiet, and to breathe a confined air. This error is the greater, the more delicate the children, and the more premature their mental powers are. The bodily powers of such children are sooner exhausted; they suffer from dyspepsia, headache, and a host of nervous complaints; their brain is liable to inflammation and serious effusions; and a premature death is frequently the consequence of such a violation of nature. It is indeed to be lamented that the influence of the physical on the moral part of man is not sufficiently understood. There are parents who will pay masters very dearly, in hope of giving excellency to their child; but who will hesitate to spend the tenth part to procure them bodily health. Some by an absurd infatuation take their own constitutions as a measure of those of their children, and because they themselves in advanced life can support confinement and intense application with little injury to health; they conclude that their young and delicate children can do the same. Such notions are altogether erroneous. "Bodily deformities, curved spines and unfitness for various occupations, and the fulfillment for future duties, frequently result from such unwise management of children. The advantages of a sound body are inestimable for the individuals themselves, their friends, and their posterity. Body and mind ought to be calculated in harmony, and neither of them at the expense of the other. Health should be the basis and instruction the ornament of early education. The development of the body will assist the manifestations of the mind, and a good mental education will contribute to bodily health. The organs of the mental operations, when they are too soon and too much exercised, suffer and become unfit for their functions. This explains the reason why young geniuses often descend at a later age into the class of common men. Indeed, experience shows that among children of almost equal dispositions, those who are brought up with particular care, and begin to read and write when their bodily constitution has acquired some solidity, soon overtake those who are dragged early to their spelling-books to the detriment of their bodily frame. No school education, strictly speaking, ought to begin before seven years of age. We shall, however, see in the following chapters on the laws of exercise, that many ideas and notions may be communicated to children by other means than books or by keeping them quiet on benches. When education shall become practical and applicable to the future destination of individuals, children will be less plagued with "nothings," but they will be made answerable not only for their natural gifts of intellect, but also for the just employment of their moral powers and the preservation and cultivation of their bodily constitution, since vigor in it is indispensable to enjoyment and usefulness. They will be made acquainted with the natural laws of nutrition and all vital functions, and with their influence on health." (Education: Its Elementary Principles, founded on the Nature of Man. By Dr. Sprague.)

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flammarion of some organ, and frequently of the brain. Its most characteristic symptoms, when it affects the brain, are enlargement of the head and premature development of the intellectual faculties. On examining the heads of those who die of this disease, the brain is found very voluminous, but ordinarily healthy. Meckel observes that its mass is increased in rickets—an effect gradually produced, without disorganization of the brain, by increased action in its blood-vessels, and the consequent transmission to it of more blood than usual. Being thus augmented in size, increased mental power is the consequence of this augmentation. "One of the most remarkable phenomena in the second stage of rickets," says Meckel, "is the prodigious development and energy of the intellectual faculties. Ricketty children have minds active and penetrating; their wit is astrophing; they are susceptible of lively passions, and have perspicuity which does not belong to their age. Their brains enlarge in the same manner as the cranium does." He adds: "This wonderful imagination, this premature mental power which rickets occasions, has but a short duration. The intellectual faculties are soon exhausted by the precocity and energy of this development."

I shall pursue this interesting subject to a conclusion in subsequent letters.

W. McK. Montreal, Feb. 9th, 1888.

AIM. Aim for the beautiful and bright, 'Twill be thy leading star, And as the hawk soars in his flight And fowls reach for the dew.

Aim, though thy way be in the night, Still aim with lifted eye; Seek for the hidden stars whose light Shines in the darkest sky.

Aim, though in lowest depths thy way, Thy path lie through the mire; Aim yet to reach high up thy way With hopes that never tire.

So bravely go and upward reach, And oft though thou may fall, Each rind sweeter hopes shall teach If thou but heed the call.

Then take unto thy heart this thought, 'Twill be thy leading star, If faith be true to each trial's wrought With beauty from afar.

'Tis upward to realms that are blest, Then walk with soul of trust; In skies above go seek thy rest— Not low, but high the dust.

THE LENTEN TIME. The feast of Easter must be prepared for by a forty days' recollection and penance. These forty days are among the principal of the liturgical year, and among the most powerful means employed by the Church for exciting in the hearts of her children the spirit of the Christian vocation. It is of the utmost importance that such a season of grace should produce its work in our souls, the renovation of the whole spiritual life. The Church, therefore, has instituted as a preparation the holy time of Lent. It was after the pontificate of St. Gregory that the last four days of Quinquagesima Week were added to Lent, in order that the number of fasting days might be exactly forty. As early, however, as the ninth century the custom was in force of beginning Lent on Ash Wednesday, the "In Capite Jejunii," that is to say, the beginning of the fast; and Amalarius, who gives us every detail of the Liturgy of the ninth century, tells us that it was even then the rule to begin the fast four days before the first Sunday in Lent. We find the practice confirmed by two Councils held in the same century. But, out of respect for the form of divine service drawn up by St. Gregory, the Church does not make any important change in the office of the Lenten days. Up to the evening of Saturday, when alone she begins the Lenten rite, she observes the rubrics prescribed for Quinquagesima week.

Thus it was that the Church, by this anticipation of Lent by four days, gave the exact number of forty days to the Holy Season, which she has instituted in imitation of the Forty Days spent by our Saviour in the desert. The first Sunday of Lent being called Quinquagesima (forty), each of the three previous Sundays has a name expressive of an additional ten; the nearest to Lent, Quinquagesima (fifty); the second, Sexagesima (sixty); the third, Septuagesima (seventy).

As the time of the Easter celebration, it comes sooner or later, according to the changes of the great feast. The 18th of January and the 22nd of February are called the Septuagesima Keys, because the Sunday, called Septuagesima, cannot be earlier in the year than the first, nor later than the second of these two days.

THE LATE ARCHBISHOP LAMY. Archbishop Jean Baptiste Lamy died at his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, at 8 o'clock on the morning of the 13th, in his seventy-fourth year, after an illness of five weeks, of pneumonia. His death was painless. The pneumonia had been subdued several days previous to his death, but he had not the strength to rally from its effects. He was born in France, came to America in 1835 and went to Santa Fe in 1851. Having been appointed Bishop of Agaton and Vicar Apostolic of New Mexico, it was to a great extent by his labor that the Catholic Church and the numerous educational and charitable institutions have reached their present degree of prosperity and power in the South. His early life in New Mexico was one of great hardship and danger from hostile Indians on his numerous visits to the churches scattered over a wide area of country and on his journeys across the plains to Church councils held in the Atlantic States. He was made Archbishop of Santa Fe 12 years ago, with Colorado and Arizona as suffragans, but resigned in 1885 on account of the breaking of his health from age and hard work. He was succeeded by Rev. J. B. Salpointe, who had been coadjutor. Archbishop Lamy was known and loved by more people than any one in the State, and mourning for his death is general and pronounced.

God planted fear in the soul as truly as he planted hope or courage. Fear is a kind of bent or hinge which rings the mind into quick life and avoidance upon the approach of danger. It is the soul's signal for rallying.

THE IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT.

LONDON, Feb. 14.—In the House of Commons to-day Sir G. O. Trevelyan resumed the debate on the Address in reply to the Queen's speech. He contended that the coercion act had done little to suppress crime, but a great deal to alienate and shock public opinion. The conviction of twelve members of the House of Commons would happily do more than anything else to bring about a settlement of the Irish question. He reminded the leaders of the Irish question that after six months of the East's unwavering support he had advocated the extension of local Government to Ireland. Why were they now silent when the Tory Government had decided to try to rule Ireland by coercion alone, ignoring a policy of concession, without which it was impossible for the country to be peaceful and prosperous?

Major Sanderson taunted Sir George with shirking an explanation of his change of opinion. He quoted extracts from Sir George's speeches denouncing the League and Mr. Gladstone's policy. Mr. Trevelyan said he had compared Mr. Balfour to a vicious cat and Mr. Healy to two short years ago had likened Sir George to a rat. The Parnellites and the "rats" were close friends now fighting with the "cat." Well, when rats fought with the "cat" the rats generally got the worst of it. Mr. Parnell's attack upon the Government last evening was the weakest ever made in House. The leader of the league could say nothing to justify the terrorism against which the Government was fighting to deliver the people. Every man who really cared for the welfare of Ireland would applaud the Government for destroying an organization that was preying upon the vitals of the country. The Parnellites were men who were never law-abiding and who never would be, let the law be what it might. An Irishman was not a man who naturally sympathized with law of any kind. Irishmen had virtues, but that was one of the defects of the race to which he himself belonged. Mr. Gladstone as blindfolded the people to the immoral teachings of the League and asked if the moral law of the Gladstonians—"thou shalt not steal—except from landlords"—was likely to educate the moral sense of the nation.

Mr. Labouchere said that Major Sanderson was the mouthpiece of a Conservative cave which had been ordered by the Government to govern to protect the interests of a few landlords. His speech was evidence of the failure of coercion, because he demanded more coercion. (Cheers.) Naturally the Government, in order to retain the country's support, told that continued coercion would lead the Irish to abandon home rule and erect statues to an eminent uncle and his nephew. (Laughter.) The Government's platitudes were worthy of Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate. Indeed, if there had been a press in Jerusalem the organs of the Pharisees and Sadducees would doubtless have said the best part of the people were on the side of Pilate and only the scum on the surface. Mr. Trevelyan's speech was an attack upon the Government with reference to the Mitchellstown affair which, he said, demanded a strict enquiry.

Thomas W. Russell (Unionist member for Tyrone) said he was disappointed with the Parnellites. To be sure they remembered Mitchellstown, but they appeared to have forgotten Tullymore about which he had written during the recess. Mr. Russell made a long speech, in which he commended the Government's policy and urged Mr. Balfour to go straight forward and have neither eyes nor ears for anything outside the four corners of the land and to shut his eyes to the pestiferous and the evidence of the increase of crime in Ireland which he pointed out as being due to the Government's policy and urged Mr. Balfour to go straight forward and have neither eyes nor ears for anything outside the four corners of the land and to shut his eyes to the pestiferous and the evidence of the increase of crime in Ireland which he pointed out as being due to the Government's policy and urged Mr. Balfour to go straight forward and have neither eyes nor ears for anything outside the four corners of the land and to shut his eyes to the pestiferous and the evidence of the increase of crime in Ireland which he pointed out as being due to the Government's policy and urged Mr. Balfour to go straight forward and have neither eyes nor ears for 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