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ROTO-LATERAL CURVATURE OF THE SPINE.\*

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There are few affections in which the aid of the surgeon is sought that yield less satisfactory results in treatment than roto-lateral deviations of the vertebral column. To the family physician each case is a standing rebuke; drugs have but a narrow sphere of usefulness; time—that so frequently comes to our aid—renders the case worse; mechanical appliances prove themselves hurtful rather than helpful in the majority of cases; for treatment by exercise much individual attention is required, coupled with a careful study of each case and a considerable knowledge of gymnastics. Now, as when Edward Harrison† wrote, early in this century, "these cases have hitherto been intractable enough to deserve to be ranked among the *approbria medicorum*."

Little advance has been made in the pathology and treatment of this affection since Percival Pott‡ so graphically distinguished from other affections of the disease since recognized as Pott's disease. The clinical pictures drawn by John Shaw,§ James Wilson,|| and others, early

in this century, are equal to any that have been given in later times.

Curvature of the spine is much more common in girls than in boys, in the proportion of more than five to one. More than half of the cases develop before the tenth year, and congenital cases have been described. Usually the attention of the mother is first attracted by the condition of the shoulders or breasts. It is a common expression that "one of the shoulders is growing out," or that "one of the breast bones is out of its place." Occasionally attention is first called to the fact that "one hip is farther out than the other."

For purposes of clinical description, we here refer to two classes of cases, which differ in degree rather than in kind: First, those cases in which the deformity is slight and comparatively recent; secondly, those in which the deformity is more strongly marked, is of longer standing, is accompanied by deformity in the individual vertebræ, and by rotation.

When advice is sought in the first class of cases, it is usual for the mother to refer to a lack of symmetry of the shoulder blades, or to the fact that the ilio-costal space is deeper on one side than on the other. Any slight deviation of the spine from the perpendicular is likely to have escaped notice. Sometimes the distortion is first noticed by the dressmaker, who complains that it is impossible to make a rightly-fitting garment. The most noticeable curve, that in the dorsal region, is, in the vast majority of cases, towards the right. In such cases the

\*Read before the Toronto Medical Society.

†Spinal Diseases, by Edward Harrison, 1827; preface.

‡Chirurgical Works of Percival Pott, Esq., vol. iii., pp. 427-493.

§John Shaw, "Nature and Treatment of the Distortions of the Spine," 1823.

||James Wilson, "Lectures on the Structure and Physiology of Parts Composing the Skeleton, and on Diseases of Bones and Joints," 1820.