Original Communications.

A Résumé of the present state of our knowledge of Hæmophilia. By F. J. AUSTIN, M.D., C.M., L.R.C.P.E., L.R.C.S.E. Read before the Medico-Chirurgical Society of Montreal, (on the 21st May, 1875.)

Hæmophilia is the name now generally employed to express that particular form of the hæmorrhagic Diathesis, which is distinctly congenital, nearly always hereditary, and frequently accompanied by a tendency to pain and swelling of the joints.

It is characterized by an exceedingly uncontrollable tendency to hæmrrohages, either spontaneous, or upon the slightest wound or abrasion of the skin, and the difficulty experienced in arresting the flow of blood. But this hæmorrhage must be not only obstinate and prolonged, but must be also Congenital in order to mark the case as one of Hæmophilia.

A Hæmorrhagic Diathesis or tendency to hæmorrhage, may develop itself in young and previously healthy persons, from exposure to defective Hygienic conditions, and disappear on a return to a state more favourable to health; or sometimes without any apparent hereditary taint this diathesis may show itself during adult life and remain during life.—

A hæmorrhagic tendency frequently does appear in the course of certain diseases, as Purpura, Scurvy, Cyanosis, Hepatic, Renal, Splenic, and some forms of Cardiac disease and in plethoric and anemic conditions of the system; this tendency may even last for years, but in Hæmophilia it is congenital or almost so, not necessarily attended with any organi disease, developes itself in infancy, and usually continues as a prominent symptom throughout the life of the unfortunate sufferer.

Our standard text books on medicine and surgery, do not devote much space to this subject, and with a few exceptions give rather an incomplete and cursory discription of the disease, in some cases making statements which are not fully born out by the experience of those who have made a study of the disease, some of them doing little more than mention that the Hæmorrhagic Diathesis is sometimes said to be hereditary.

This summary disposal of the subject probably depends on the fact, that although numerous cases of uncontrollable hæmorrhage, both spontaneous and trautmatic, have been recorded by English observers, their frequent hereditary origin was not noticed until comparatively recently. In Germany however, where the disease appears to be more frequent than in other countries, possibly from the fact that having been first recognized and studied by the German physicians, it has been more prominently brought forward; its hereditary origin has been carefully traced through whole families for several generations.

The disease is by them called Hæmophilia, and those subject to it are commonly and expressively styled "Bleeders."

I much regret that my inability to read German has restricted my observations to the isolated cases, and short fragmentary articles on the subject to be found in the English Medical periodicals and text books, but chiefly to the admirable Treatise on Hæmophilia by Dr. Wickham Legg, Casualty Physician to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, from whose work I have largely drawn, in fact Dr. Legg is, as far as I know, the only English writer who has taken the pains to scientifically collect and classify the history and phenomena of the disease.

That the disease is, in nearly all cases hereditary, is now generally acknowledged.

That it may arise *de novo* is still undecided, cases are recorded in which no hereditary taint could be traced, but these cases are open to doubt, unless it can be proved that the predisposition had not previously existed in the family, because as we will see presently it may remain latent for many years.

Then again, we must have all found how difficult it is, especially amongst the poorer classes, to trace the family history of a case even as far back as the parents, to say nothing of the grand parents.

It has been thought by some, that the disease may arise from the intermarriage of relations, grounding their opinion on its prevalance among the Germans and Jews, amongst whom the marriage of cousins is not discountenanced.

There are several curious phenomena regarding the influence of sex in reproducing and propagating the disease. It was at one time supposed that the male members of "Bleeder" families only were affected, further research has shown this to be unfounded; but it appears that in females the phenomena of the disease are less marked, and of a lower degree of intensity, usually not making their appearance until the age of puberty; it then manifests itself, not as a rule by excessive and uncontrollable hemorrhage when wounded, but by spontaneous hemorrhages menorrhagie and post partem hæmorrhages and to ecchymoses on slight injury.

A most remarkable feature of the disease is, that although the hereditary taint may only exhibit itself very slightly, in a woman belonging to a "Bleeder"