

HEADACHES IN CHILDREN.

When a child complains of headache our most careful scrutiny is demanded, and if it be too young to describe its sufferings its manner and appearance are highly suggestive of some cerebral disturbance. Look at the little child of some ten or twelve months old, who is well developed and comes of healthy parents. There is the excitement of dentition, and the little thing is observed to put its tiny hand to its head, which it rolls, perhaps, from side to side, and the anxious mother at last detects a slight irregularity in the muscular movements of the eye ball. Reflex nervous irritation is conveyed through the fifth nerve to the brain, and irritation so awakened may be followed at any moment by a convulsion. The child is wakeful, uneasy, and restless. The brain, so needful of rest at this early period of life, is susceptible of mischief. I think there is hardly a practitioner among us who on looking back has not, in the course of his early experience, had reason to think he has overlooked these significant symptoms, and at the same time felt surprise at having neglected them. Habitual headaches in older children indicate an exhausted and irritable brain, and if intellectual exertion be carried too far in such cases mischief is likely to ensue. It seems extraordinary that educated men who have the care of young persons should not see this danger in the anemia produced by over-study, the irritability and excitability of manner, and the impossibility of concentration, so necessary to the accomplishment of any undertaking. If intellectual exertion be carried beyond a certain point the brain becomes anemic, fatigued, and the nutrition in the ganglionic cells of the cortex becomes impaired, diseased, or in some way altered from health. Whatever may be the exact change in these cells, due perhaps in a great measure to the absence of healthy blood, the inference is most probably correct that children so suffering can not readily grasp new ideas; and if strong and powerful efforts are put forward in this direction the knowledge is not retained, the object is frustrated, one idea is mixed up with another, and confusion results. This, I apprehend, is just enough to illustrate the grand problem that the body must be looked to as well as the mind; and the younger the child, the greater is the necessity for the delay of intellectual training. And it does strike one as very extraordinary that the nervous system, which is the last to attain complete development, should be the first to be overtaxed in this age of forcing and strain, when revolutionary ideas are apt to overrule the judgment. It is not that the moderate exercise of the brain in early life is injurious; on the contrary, it is conducive to health. The mind is then flexible and plastic, impressions are enduring, and habits of concentration are easily acquired. It is the premature and excessive exercise of it which is prejudicial, when the bodily powers need the chief attention. No rigid rules, no cast-iron system, will do for

the training of all children. All are not cast in the same mould. Any system of education must be elastic, since mediocrity is the rule; and if more be expected of some children whose physical development is at the same time feeble, then disease or premature ill-health is the consequence.

Headaches are often *hereditary*. They have attacked children of the same family who have been brought up at a distance from one another, and whose surroundings have been quite different. In such cases there is something peculiar in the nervous system itself—a tendency to nervous disease. It will, I think, be often found on inquiry that the parents of such children are liable to nervous disease, nervous exhaustion, paralysis, etc., and perhaps some children of the family have had epilepsy, chorea, or asthma. In many instances, too, there is some faulty condition of the blood. The brain, badly nourished through a scanty supply of blood, and that poor in quality, loses its balance and can not resume its tone.

I will now briefly allude to some of the varieties of headache in children. *Neuralgic* headache (one-side headache) is not a very common type in children, but it oftener occurs than is generally supposed. So far as my experience goes, it has been met with chiefly among *three* classes of children: 1. Those of the nervous temperament, whose nervous system is easily fretted, excited, and therefore sooner exhausted. If such children are pressed too much with their studies, then they more readily suffer. Any degree of intellectual exertion is exciting to children of timid and delicate constitution, who are not only too anxious to learn, but can not throw their studies off the mind. 2. Those children who have been reduced by some long and exhausting illness, in-door confinement, and bad air. 3. Those born of delicate parents, and who are badly fed.—*W. H. Day, M.D., in Medical Press and Circular.*

ON THE TREATMENT OF CONVULSIONS IN CHILDREN.

Eustace Smith, M.D., F.R.C.P. (London *Lancet*):

When called to a case of convulsions the practitioner should lose no time in questioning the attendants, but should have the child placed in a warm bath of the temperature of 90° F., and apply sponges dipped in cold water to his head. This is the time-honored remedy. It is certainly an innocent one; it may tend to quiet the nervous system; and it is one the efficacy of which is so generally recognized among the public that it would be unwise to court unfavorable criticism by neglecting to employ it. The bath must not be continued too long. In ordinary cases the child should be allowed to remain in it for ten or fifteen minutes, according to his age. If, however, the patient be an infant who has lately been reduced by an exhausting diarrhoea, he should not be allowed to remain more than two or three