

"The treatment of this chlorotic palpitation may be divided under two heads:—1. To remove the constipated state of the bowels which always exists here, by means of purgative medicines, which are supposed to exert some specific stimulus on the uterus: of this class I think aloe the most preferable. 2. To improve the general state of health by the administration of a full diet of animal food, a moderate allowance of fermented liquors, by taking a sufficiency of exercise—walking, if possible, is to be preferred—and by the use of medicines which are supposed to possess the property of promoting materially the formation of red blood—chalybeates, for instance. By the use of these, and all other means which may suggest themselves to you as being useful in raising the debilitated system to a proper degree of vigour and to the highest possible tone, you will, in the majority of instances, quickly and effectually restore your patients to health."—*Med. Times*, Aug. 9, 1845.

## MIDWIFERY.

### FOUR CHILDREN AT A BIRTH.—ACEPHALOUS MONSTER.

SURGICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND.

Dr. Beatty said he was about to bring under the notice of the society a case which was possessed of considerable interest in many points of view. The specimen before them was a monster, which had been sent up for exhibition by Dr. Purefoy of Cloughjordan, the account given being as follows:—It was one of four children, born of the same mother at a single birth, three of whom were born alive and healthy. The first child was born at ten o'clock at night; in fourteen hours after a second appeared; in an hour after this, the monster came forth; and in an hour after that, the fourth, a living child was born. The only cause assigned for the occurrence was, that the mother had suffered considerable mental distress at about the seventh month of her pregnancy, from having seen the mutilated corpse of a cousin who was murdered in the neighbourhood; to this circumstance the neighbours were disposed to attribute the occurrence in question. The case was remarkable, (Dr. Beatty observed,) first, from the plurality of children; secondly, the birth of three alive, and in perfect condition; and thirdly, from the supposed cause of the occurrence which he had just mentioned. No examination had as yet been made of the preparation, as he was anxious to present it in as perfect a form as possible. It appeared to be, he said, one of those acephalous monsters, with, in addition, considerable deformity of all the limbs. Looking in the situation of the vertex, traces of the remains of a skull could be observed, and the specimen was found to differ from the ordinary acephalous monsters in their being no face. A slight projection occupied the natural situation of the nose, but no trace of any other feature existed. The upper limbs were particularly distorted, the arm being exceedingly short, and an absence apparently of the forearm, there being at the extremity of the arm a fin-like process representing a hand; the body, thorax, and pelvis appeared pretty natural, though very much misshapen; club feet were attached to both lower extremities; there was no trace of an anus; the dorsal region presented nothing unusual, there being no appearance of *spina bifida*. The monster was of the male sex. While thus examining the specimen, Dr. Beatty observed, the subject of monstrosity at large seemed to suggest itself for consideration, so that a few observations on that question might not be inapplicable just then. All present were no doubt aware, he said, that at the present moment the subject of monstrosities has given rise to a great deal of speculation in the minds of inquiring persons, leading to differences of opinion as to classes and kinds, some founding a classification arising

from a redundancy of parts, as in children born with supernumerary fingers and toes, an occurrence by no means common; others, again, founded a classification depending on deficiencies of parts, for instance, of the arms, or legs, or the absence of the hand, and so forth. Again, monsters were to be found with all the parts apparently present, but in a misshapen condition, the arms and legs being both perhaps pretty naturally formed, but short and deficient in size, &c. The cases presenting a deficiency of all the parts had been classified as conglomerate or mixed prodigies, their being apparent only a mass of flesh, and to this class of cases he would call their attention presently. A very common cause of monstrosity, he would remind them, was a deficiency of the upper part of the calvarium, called cat-headed, from the resemblance to that animal. This, he observed, would appear to be the case in the fœtus under examination, but presenting, in addition, an example of deficiency and of misshapen parts. A question with many has been the cause of the deficiency of the calvarium in these cases, and among a great many opinions offered, it appeared to him that the one now put forward by Rudolphi of Berlin, was nearest the truth. Rudolphi is of opinion that in the ordinary acephalous fœtus the deficiency of the brain is attributed to the fœtus in utero having got hydrocephalus, the fluid in which continues to increase till it bursts through the brain and its investing membranes, and finally through the integuments, the fœtus escaping with life, but born without the brain, and with complete absence of the upper part of the head. In the museum at Berlin are numerous specimens prepared by Rudolphi, exhibiting the disease in all its stages,—one with the head so enlarged by fluid as to be on the point of bursting; another, with a projection through the integuments of a vesicular character, the covering being a very delicate membrane through which the contained fluid is seen, and the brain, apparently, totally destroyed. From these and other proofs, Dr. Beatty considered that we are justified in accepting Rudolphi's explanation of the occurrence of acephalous fœtuses as the one most likely to be correct. Now, with respect to mental impressions, he would observe, that this is a vexed question, and has been for many years; however, numerous instances on record go to show that some connection exists between impressions made upon the mother and the fœtus in utero. He would not of course detain them by going into a detail of all the occurrences of this sort which might be adduced, but would just mention two striking cases which had come under his own immediate knowledge, selected from his father's case-book; one, was that of a lady, who, in the sixth month of her pregnancy, while walking on the South Circular-road, was accosted by a strong sturdy beggarman who solicited alms; she walked on, taking no notice of him, but he, finding his persecution unavailing, drew aside his coat and presented the short stump of an arm that had been removed half way between the shoulder and elbow. The lady, greatly shocked at the sight, got home as fast as she could, but went on well up to her full period; immediately on the birth of the child, however, she asked, with great anxiety, whether there was anything the matter with it. Dr. Beatty's father had heard nothing of the foregoing occurrence, and was of course surprised at the lady's asking the question, but on looking at the child there was found only one arm complete, the other being only a stump, as if after amputation. Such was the story, upon which it was for the society to set what value they pleased. The next case was one recorded several years after, in which the child was born with six fingers on each hand. The lady stated that when about five months pregnant, a person sitting in the same room with her was suddenly seized with epilepsy, and the patient's hands moved so rapidly that the fingers appeared to this lady as if multiplied to an immense number. She could never after banish the vision from her