

## SURGERY.

### NEUROMIMESIS.

#### LECTURE ON THE NERVOUS MIMICRY OF JOINT DISEASES.

By SIR JAMES PAGET.

(CONTINUED.)

The conjunction of pain and stiffness in a joint always looks like real disease; but you may generally detect the mimicry by observing that, while these things would indicate disease of much severity, everything else is as if there were no disease, or at most only a very mild arthritis. The inconsistency of the several parts of the case exposes its true nature. Lately I had to see a young lady, with a reported healthy nervous system, whom I found lying in bed with extreme contraction of the thigh towards the pelvis, pain at the hip and knee, increased pain on any touching near the hip-joint, and especially great pain and tenderness at and about the tuberosity of the ischium. She could not bear the least attempt to straighten the joint, and the contraction was said to be persistent during sleep. She had had vomiting, hated food, and looked ill and distressed; and all these troubles were ascribed to slight injury or over-fatigue a few days previously. The case looked very like real disease of the hip; but if it had been so at all it must have been a very acute disease, swift and severe, such as should have had attendant fever. Yet the pulse and temperature were natural, and there was certainly nothing in the case which might not be explained by mere nerve-disturbance. And the event proved that there was no organic disease, for after a few days' rest, with careful food, and some wine, and mental quietude, the pain ceased, and then very slowly the limb resumed its natural power and posture, and the young lady married.

Let me here tell you of two or three notable groups of cases of pain and stiffness of joints without real disease. None are more frequent than those of boys from ten to fifteen, who complain of pain and declare themselves unable to walk after injuries of the ankle or knee, or who disuse their arms for pain after injuries of the elbow or other part. They describe the pain as horrible, and hold their limbs in some unnatural position, and limp and cry when you try to make them walk; yet you can find nothing wrong in the shape or size, or temperature of the joint, or in the general health. It is very hard to say whether they are shamming or neuralgic; but the utter inconsistency of their cases proves that they are the one or the other, and you must make them use their limbs. They will often do it better if you have first moved the joint rather severely for them, and "loosened" them.

Something like these, yet different in having little or no pain, are the children who mimic a

disease of a joint through fear. After a hurt the immense care bestowed on a joint, and the earnest injunctions not to move it, seem to impress some children's minds so deeply that, long after all is well, they hold up their joints scrupulously and timidly, and dare not try to use them. You may amuse yourselves with the astonishment with which both child and parents find, on a positive assurance, that walking or any other use of the lame limb is quite easy and painless.

Another group allied with these is that in which you find young people with joints contracted by involuntary and quiet muscular power after injury. The joints are painless unless when great force is used at them; and you can easily feel that their stiffness is not through inflammation or adhesion, but through muscular resistance like that which sometimes produces wry-neck directly or very soon after a blow. You feel a kind of elastic recoil at efforts to move them, as if the effort was resisted by a tough elastic substance. Ether or chloroform decides at once the diagnosis: as soon as the patient is insensible the joint becomes movable as widely and as smoothly as an uninjured healthy one, and only slowly if ever stiffens again.

Just like these are the ordinary cases of painless stiff joints in hysterical girls: the muscles hold them fixed, and that is all; the joints are healthy to the touch and the sight, and even to the patient are painless unless violently used.

In all these cases the ground of diagnosis is essentially the same. You have one or two or three signs of the disease of a joint present in an extremely marked degree, or at least well marked; a pain, or a stiffness, or both, and limping or other consequent disability, such as would exist in a joint severely or long diseased. But with a joint really thus diseased there should be—unless it had some chronic, rheumatic, or gouty trouble—swelling, or heat, or spoiled shape, or general wasting of the limb, or all these together—and with them usually some disturbance of the general health. The absence of these is weightier evidence than the presence of the other symptoms.

All that I have just been saying relates to the distortion of joints produced by muscular action, not to deformity due to displacement of one or more of the bones forming the joint, such deformity as you see, for instance, in the knee when the tibia falls backwards and outwards from the femur, or is rotated by the weight of the foot, on which also the bedclothes may have been allowed to rest. When this or any similar deformity exists, it is a nearly sure sign of real disease, past or present, for it can scarcely happen except through textural changes, through softening of the ligaments and other textures about the joints permitting one bone to move away from the other. Now such softening as this can hardly take place except in inflammation. I will not

say that it is impossible, but I know that it is very rare. Posture alone, though very long continued, will not produce deformity of joints with displacement of bones. I saw a gentleman who, in a half lunatic condition, sat for five years in the same posture, and was credibly said to have never moved. At the end of this time his knee-joints were contracted to a right angle, and felt as if absolutely fixed; yet they were not deformed. Their bones had their right relations; and after some weeks of extension with instruments, the knees were straightened, and power over them was completely gained.

So, too, in a case told me by Professor Flower. A man, whose skeleton is at Marburg, was encased by his relatives for over twenty years in a space in which he could only sit with his limbs doubled up, and in which he could have had only very narrowly restrained movements of his joints, yet his limbs did not become deformed, and his joints retained their normal texture. And many a case of hysterical joint, after being contracted for years, has recovered without any error of shape.

Speaking generally, then, the presence of deformity in a joint reputed diseased may be taken as certain evidence that it is or was diseased, and the absence of such deformity in a joint which has long been very painful, or, in other characters, has seemed acutely diseased, is nearly as certain evidence that there has not been inflammation; unless, indeed, the shape of the joint has been maintained by careful treatment. A few weeks of acute inflammation of a joint will almost certainly change its shape and the relations of its bones, unless care is taken to prevent the change; but even many months of mimicry of acute disease will not produce or permit such change.

## THERAPEUTICS.

### CROTON-CHLORAL HYDRATE.

The profession and the public are chiefly indebted to Dr. Oscar Liebreich for the introduction of chloral hydrate: and this obligation is further increased by the addition of croton-chloral hydrate, which will doubtless prove an equally valuable therapeutic agent. It is of the greatest service in cases of nerve pain. Every sufferer from neuralgia is anxious to obtain speedy relief from pain: this may be obtained by taking croton-chloral hydrate, and then the antecedent causes of neuralgia may afterwards be inquired into and treated accordingly. The following cases are interesting, as showing the immediate relief from pain that this drug affords:

A. suffered from facial neuralgia of a most severe character; it affected her hearing and eyesight. She could not rest or take food. She took one grain of croton-chloral hydrate every hour. In three hours she was considerably better. After