

SYMPTOMS OF ACUTE RHEUMATISM.*

By W. P. CAVEN, M.D., TORONTO.

In view of the great differences in the manifestations of rheumatism as ordinarily seen in adults, and those occurring in children, I have thought it best to describe them separately. In the first place I will describe the symptoms as met with in adults.

I. RHEUMATISM IN THE ADULT.—Rheumatic fever has no definite incubation period. The onset of rheumatism is usually gradual and is preceded in a great many cases by a few days of malaise, sore throat and irregular pains in the limbs and joints. Rarely, however, the characteristic acute symptoms may set in very abruptly. At the onset chilliness is often met with, but well marked rigors are not frequent, and when they do occur there are generally several of them. There is seldom headache. The appearance of the tongue is somewhat characteristic, being flabby, teeth marked and covered with a white fur. Twenty-four hours after the onset the disease is usually fully developed, the marked features being pyrexia, pain and joint affections, the condition of the skin and of the urine.

(a) *As to the Pyrexia.*—The temperature is in most cases severe in proportion to the number of joints affected, yet as Fagge says, "Even Wunderlich was unable to recognize any typical course" beyond the fact that it is usually highest in the evening (except in cases of hyperpyrexia). The highest temperature is reached early in the disease—from the second to the fourth day—and rarely exceeds 104 F. Under treatment, as a rule, it rapidly falls. The pulse is often very rapid, large, full and bounding, and sometimes dicrotic.

(b) *Pains and Joint Affections.*—Pain usually commences in one of the larger joints—knees, shoulders, ankles, wrists and hands—and rapidly becomes very severe. When in pain the joints are kept in characteristic positions; the knees slightly flexed, the ankles extended, the elbows flexed, the wrists extended, and fingers of the hand slightly turned towards the under side. The joints are swollen, hot and reddish as well as acutely painful. One of the most characteristic features of acute rheumatism is the suddenness with which the joint affection clears up in one joint and flies to another. One day a joint may be extremely painful, swollen and hot, and the next be free from pain and present an almost normal appearance. The swelling around the joint differs from that of gout inasmuch as it does not pit on pressure, nor does desquamation of the epi-

* Read before Toronto Clinical Society, Dec., 1902.