

## SOME POINTS OF GENERAL INTEREST IN OPHTHALMOLOGY.

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The value of the ophthalmoscope was settled long ago, and the functions of ophthalmoscopy are already well defined. Invaluable to the ophthalmologist, the eye-mirror is of undoubted service to the general practitioner, both for purposes of diagnosis and the study of morbid processes which may elucidate those beyond direct observation. The relation of diseases of the eye to those of other parts of the system, and various points in ophthalmoscopy having been brought up from time to time in our meetings, a brief consideration of them must suffice on this occasion.

Optic neuritis, retinitis, and atrophy of the optic nerve are the principal morbid conditions at the fundus claiming general attention now-a-days. It is worthy of note that there may be excellent vision with double optic neuritis, and in neuritis, retinitis, and choroiditis pain (ocular) is generally absent, as also objective symptoms. Double optic neuritis\* depends generally upon coarse intra-cranial disease, as tumor, meningitis, syphilitic growths, &c., but gives no sign as to the extent, nature, or site of the mischief; and the latter may last for months or years before lighting up the neuritis, which again may be transient. Rarely, brain trouble causes only one-sided neuritis, but the latter is generally due to orbital changes. Occasionally double optic neuritis occurs in morbus Brightii with cephalalgia simulating that from brain-tumor, &c. Acute myelitis may also set up neuritis. Cerebral disease does not always do so.

There is generally impaired sight in optic neuritis, and though this may improve, it generally deteriorates as secondary atrophy sets in. The latter may be somewhat difficult in the later stages to distinguish from primary atrophy, which is most often due to diseases of

the brain and spinal cord, as locomotor ataxy, lateral, and insular sclerosis, and hydrocephalus, &c.

It is almost beyond peradventure, that alcohol and tobacco, singly or combined, used in excess for a length of time, will induce congestion or a low grade of inflammation of the optic nerve with secondary atrophy, and more or less marked amblyopia. (Abstinence and strychnia, with or without electricity, generally issue in recovery.) Lead poisoning may also induce optic neuritis ending in atrophy. It is now undoubted also that in some subjects quinine taken in large doses at short intervals will cause temporary blindness or great impairment, and also a permanent contraction of the field of vision. Though the etiology of the affection is obscure, it is well known that there is a characteristic (though not pathognomonic or constant) retinitis in morbus Brightii. There is a hæmorrhagic retinitis due to various causes, as malarial fever, thrombosis, &c., and which may also be the precursor of similar but much graver changes in the cerebral mass. Syphilitic iritis cannot easily be overlooked, but as specific neuritis, neuro-retinitis, and retino-choroiditis may develop insidiously without external symptoms or general manifestations, any complaints of syphilitic subjects as to failing sight merit prompt attention. Neuro-retinitis may also occur in diabetes, leucocythæmia, progressive pernicious anæmia, &c., and in the two latter is often of hæmorrhagic type. Embolism of the central artery of the retina causes opacity of the retina from œdema (or lymphoid infiltration), and blindness. Suppurative choroiditis or panophthalmitis, with loss of the eye, may occur in cerebro-spinal meningitis, phlebitis, low fevers, &c. It is well known that paralysis of one or more of the ocular nerves with variable strabismus (and double vision) may be due to basilar meningitis or less serious central trouble. A transient paresis of one or more of the ocular muscles sometimes precedes, even by a term of years, locomotor ataxy and general paralysis of the insane. Paralysis of the sphincter iridis and loss of accommodation are also sometimes premonitory symptoms. Dilatation of the pupil (mydriasis) is found in diphtheria, insanity, meningitis, hydrocephalus, cerebral

\* The term "papillitis" is now used for "optic neuritis," "swollen disk," "choked disk," &c.