

Now, with regard to their cases, the two following questions suggest themselves:—

1. Is the enlargement of the liver due to primary hepatic disease, and the ascites, therefore, true hepatic ascites? or is it due mainly to hepatic congestion dependent on the impediment to the circulation through the heart, and the ascites, therefore, not true hepatic ascites, but indirectly cardiac?

2. Is the œdema of the legs the direct and immediate result of the heart-mischief? or does it result from impediment to the return of blood through the inferior cava, produced by the pressure which the incumbent weight of the ascites exercises upon that vessel? or is it due to the pressure of the enlarged liver upon the inferior cava in the supine posture?

According to the answers we may make to these questions we shall arrive at one or other of the following conclusions:—

That the liver is the seat of organic disease of such a nature as to obstruct the circulation through it.

That the ascites is the direct result of this liver-disease.

That the liver is not diseased at all, but is enlarged because congested.

That the obstruction, therefore, which gives rise to the ascites, though immediately at the liver, is primarily at the heart.

That the œdema in the legs is due to the systemic venous stasis of the heart-disease.

That it is due to the pressure of the enlarged liver upon the inferior cava in the supine posture.

That it is due to the incumbent weight of the ascites pressing on the cava. This last will give rise to two alternatives; for if we consider the ascites due to liver-disease, then the œdema of the legs is a secondary hepatic symptom; if the ascites is due to the heart-disease, then the œdema is a secondary cardiac symptom.

You see, then, to how many alternatives our answers to these two questions may give rise.

Now, with regard to the first question—the nature of the liver-enlargement—I came to the conclusion that, in the case of Davis, it was secondary to the heart-disease—due simply to congestion; and that the liver was not the seat of any real disease at all: for the following reasons: First, the patient was of an age, 20, at which organic enlargement of the liver is not common; secondly, there was nothing in his antecedents or habits—no intemperance—to make liver-disease likely; thirdly, the liver was not the seat of any pain or tenderness; fourthly, although greatly increased