

IDIOTISM AND GOITRES.

There is a paper in The Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, by Mr. K. Wood, Surgeon, which contains some very curious particulars respecting the prevalence of Idiocy and Goitres in certain districts in this country:—

“In a part of the township of Oldham, called Sholver, my attention was called to the number of idiots; I took a list of their names, which I shall take the liberty of reading. From Sholver-Moor, along the face of the hill, following its curvature at the Dog-hill to Crompton, and in the immediate neighbourhood, being an extent of about three miles, there will be found, or have lately existed, a greater number of these individuals, than in any other part of the country. The ground faces nearly west, is excessively exposed to the winds which cross the Irish channel, and sweep over the flat country loaded with vapour. The lower part of the hill is defended from these winds by Werneth and Oldham Edge; but as these high grounds decline or terminate to the north, they form, with High Crompton, a rough or hollow, giving a direction to the currents, which, accumulating, rush up the valley over Royton and Shaw, to be intercepted by the hill we speak of, against which they break with considerable force. The ride along this hill is the most bleak and cold of any in the neighbourhood; the country is completely unsheltered by trees or hedge rows; the soil is thinly scattered over the surface, and the herbage scanty. At the foot of this high ground is a long tract of moss, which has lessened of late years, as an increasing population has made land more valuable; from this marshy ground flow streams which contribute to form the sources of the Medlock, the Irk, and the Beale.”

The idiots to which Mr. Wood alludes are nineteen in number; but of these only two of them are stated to be females; and as women are almost invariably the subjects of goitre, it reduces the question into another and more natural form—that if the diseases are endemic from the same cause, does it produce cretinism in man and goitre in woman. Certain it is, that they are not necessarily co-existent in the same individual.

“The endemic which is the subject of this paper, has not, so far as I know, been connected with goitre in any of the individuals of their families, although the goitrous tumour is frequently met with in the neighbourhood, particularly in young females, nor have these two affections been hitherto found connected in England, except by accident. It ought to be stated that in the short account given by the writer of the article Cretin in Rees’s Cyclopædia, we are told that some years ago a female Cretin of the name of Sotherton resided at Hull, and another at Plymouth. The only case in which I have seen defect, in any part of the nervous system conjoined with Goitre, is in a young female at Hollinwood, who is deaf and dumb, with very considerable fullness of the neck.”

“It is a well ascertained fact, that goitrous families are frequent in the valleys of the Alps, while they are rarely to be met with in