

# Progress of Medical Science.

## MEDICINE AND NEUROLOGY.

IN CHARGE OF

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### ABNORMAL SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN CHILDREN.

When the child's appetite is good and his temperature normal, most physicians are apt to think him safe in his mother's care and no longer dependent upon medical advice. Yet, if we counsel correct habits of diet, exercise and sleep, we ought not to be considered as transgressing very far the legitimate bounds of medical practice if we essay occasionally a warning word about so bad a mental habit as self-consciousness. Such advice when given to a reasonable mother, may be in the best sense prophylactic. Few parents can be gotten to believe, for example, that "forwardness," disobedience and rude conduct in a young child are sometimes a grave sign of mental deficiency. Gowers has noted them as one of the earliest indications of abnormal cerebral function. Instead of the youngsters being prompted to rudeness and impertinence, and laughed at for his supposed precocity, such performances should be viewed with anxiety, and should be gently but promptly suppressed. That small children should be "seen and not heard" is a maxim based on an enlightened psychology. The abnormal self-consciousness that prompts such outbreaks can easily develop into an incurable egomania; the growing brain tissue is, as Horace so well said long ago, *cereus in vitium flecti*. Even where it is not congenital, a morbid feeling of self can be awakened and nourished with alarming ease and speed. No child should be encouraged to repeat poetry before his mother's guests, or praised for his "pretty curls," or even have his first trousers made too much of. The less he thinks of himself the better. He may be judiciously commended for good conduct or for diligence in study, but never flattered for his cleverness and good looks, or anything which he has not come by through self-forgetting endeavor. Both boys and girls should be taught to *endure*; to neglect trifling aches and pain, and seek for a remedy rather than cry over the trouble. Self-command and self-control are the noblest things a man can strive for.