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INFANTILE SPINAL PARALYSIS

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THE occurrence of several epidemics of this disease in recent years makes this time opportune for reviewing its literature, and for re-stating the salient features which mark its pathology, symptoms, signs and treatment. There was an epidemic in Europe in 1906, another in New York and New Jersey in 1907, one in the valley of the Ottawa in 1906, and in previous years several other epidemics of less extent of which I have been able to obtain reasonably accurate and detailed accounts.

Though the clinical picture of the affection had long been recognized, yet the spinal lesion on which it depends was not known till it was demonstrated by Prevost in 1865. Soon afterward further light was offered by observations made by Clark, Charcot and Joffroy. The disease is commonly seen in children, and when described by Rilliet and Barthez it was called the "essential paralysis of children." In 1858 and 1864 Vogt and Duchenne noted the occurrence of similar symptoms in adults.

Undoubtedly, it is a disease chiefly of childhood, though its occurrence even in young infants is not rare; and it is quite certain that it may occur at any age. The writer has known of two well-marked cases occurring at eighteen years.

Boys are more commonly affected than girls. It occurs more frequently in summer than in winter. It may occur in a child who in other respects has seemed up to the time of the illness to be in good health. It certainly occurs occasionally as secondary to acute febrile diseases, scarlet fever, measles, bronchitis and pneumonia.