

WHOOPIING COUGH AND ITS TREATMENT.*

Whooping cough is an infectious disease, specific, contagious, and epidemic, occurring principally among children, and characterized especially by a paroxysmal cough. Except the knowledge of its epidemicity and its very great contagiousness, one does not know the parasitic agent of this affection.

Symptomatology.—After a period of incubation, without symptoms clinically, of from seven to eight days, the whooping cough commences and passes through three stages:—

A period of invasion, or catarrhal stage.

A period of acme or stage of characteristic fits of coughing.

A period of decline.

I. Catarrhal Stage.—The commencement of whooping cough is like that of a somewhat peculiar tracheo-bronchitis. There supervenes at the same time as a coryza with frequent sneezings an obstinate cough, provoked by an incessant laryngeal tickling. Numerous scattered sibilant and sonorous rales, varying in site and in intensity, are heard on auscultation. But this, apparently common bronchitis, is occasionally accompanied by a little conjunctivitis and by photophobia. Moreover, there occurs in the evening a slight rise of temperature; the child becomes sad and miserable, sleeps badly, and loses its appetite. The duration of this period is from eight to fifteen days; then by degrees the cough is modified and becomes convulsive.

II. Stage of Coughing Fits.—At this period the cough, with its special character, constitutes, so to speak, the sole symptom; there is no bronchitis, there is no fever, and, in this respect, Rilliet and Barthez are right in saying that whooping cough is an apyretic disease.

The Fit of Coughing. (a) Causes.—The fit of coughing is provoked by a large number of causes (an effort of deglutition, emotion, too much noise, examination of the back of the throat); often spontaneous, at least in appearance, it is generally preceded by prodromal symptoms.

(b) Prodromal Symptoms.—The prodromal symptoms consist of a sensation of tickling or of itching in the larynx, a sudden fit of sadness, lastly, an instinctive immobility; the children stop playing and their facial expression quickly changes; in the words of Trousseau, "They plan their crisis."

(c) Fit of Coughing.—This breaks forth; an inspiration precedes the paroxysm; it is followed by violent expirations, in a prolonged series of jerking expiratory coughs, succeeding each other, slowly at first, then more rapidly, without interruption. Then there occurs a pause in forced

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