

MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE.

Medical Society of London—Dr. BURKE RYAN read an abstract of a paper *On the Communicability of Gonorrhœa, in reference to Medical Jurisprudence*.—He was called on the 15th of the present month to examine two children, sisters, aged respectively one and four years. He found both labouring under a profuse puriform discharge, on the elder child of a fortnight's duration, in the younger of nine days. There was much fever; the parts, particularly in the elder, much swollen, and both suffered great pain in passing water.

The mother had no notion of the nature of the affection until an old woman, calling accidentally, told her the children were diseased. The explanation soon followed. A young woman in the house laboured under profuse gonorrhœal discharge, as the mother of the child saw by her linen. This young woman was observed washing herself in the same vessel used for washing the children, and using the same sponge to her private parts as was used for them.

Had there been but one child, Dr. R. remarked, he might have passed it over as an ordinary, yet aggravated, case of vaginal discharge in a child; but as there were two consecutively affected sisters, of this tender age, with the infection's cause so easily traceable, he thought it worthy of record, and endeavoured to make it as plain as possible by further enquiry. He therefore saw the young woman. She had gonorrhœa, under which she laboured during the last two months, using no means for curing it. She said she *did* use the children's sponge, as mentioned, but thought it more probable that the eldest child having sat upon the same vessel as herself, to pass water, was thus infected, and that the second took it from the sponge used for both. Some of the discharge was taken from each of the three, and the valuable assistance of Mr. Quackett sought for. He examined them under a magnifying power of 500 diameters. In that from the children there was scarcely anything but pus globules, thick and well defined. The discharge from the young woman, in whom the disease had been wearing itself out during two months, was of a more sanious character. There was

epithelium in abundance; a few mucous, and also pus globules, diffused, but occasionally more aggregated.

Mr. B. Ryan remarked on the paucity of well recorded cases of this nature given by elementary writers. Indeed, some of our best authors say that gonorrhœa is communicated by impure connection, and there leave the matter. Thus, Cooper says, "From the manner in which the disease is contracted," &c. Liston:—"That people come with all sorts of stories—as of water-closets," &c. Forsyth speaks of it as a disease "after impure coition." Beck, speaking of vaginal discharges in children, where strong suspicions were entertained by a third party, of the discharge being gonorrhœal, bestows not the least attention in pointing out how the disease may be contracted by the manner above related, and how, consequently, undeserved suspicion may attach to an innocent person, to be followed perhaps, as heretofore, by punishment. And Taylor, in giving, as one of the four sources of evidence of rape, the existence of gonorrhœa, adds shortly after:—"If the child be labouring under syphilis or gonorrhœa, this is positive evidence of impure intercourse either with the ravisher or some other person."

Now, in the cause of humanity Dr. Burke Ryan considered it our duty in such cases as these to take care that no innocent person suffered, for had this disease not been so easily traced to its source, or that there could have been any suspicion of foul play from lads or men who had access to the children, or had the character of the inflammation, instead of the red and sthenic, partaken of the epidemic form, with its deep coloured appearance and dark tints, bespeaking signs of violence, as spoken of by Lawrence and others, then the same fate might per chance befall the suspected individual as befell the boy whom Beck mentions as having been condemned to die on account of the death of Jane Clampden, aged four, who, from a vaginal discharge, died in a few days, having slept in the same bed with the boy. The surgeon on whose evidence he was condemned soon had reason to believe the child had fallen a victim to an epidemic. Or, suspicion might be awakened as in the parents of two children, one aged four, and the other six, mentioned by Capuron, where they declared violence had