

CARIES OF THE SPINE*

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THE specimen to be presented is from a case of Pott's disease of the dorsal spine which had been under treatment at the Children's Hospital. The patient presented the clinical picture of the disease for nearly three years, and was making fair progress towards recovery, but about two months ago she developed tuberculous meningitis and rapidly succumbed.

The specimen is of particular interest because it is the only one of its kind in the possession of the University Museum, and because it demonstrates so beautifully many of the interesting points in the gross pathology of the condition.

When one first examines the specimen in sagittal section, he is at once struck with the remarkable size of the kyphosis resulting from the collapse of a single vertebra. Further observation will show, however, that instead of a single vertebra being involved, three have practically disappeared. This is demonstrated by counting the number of intact bodies and subtracting from the number of spines. Ten from thirteen leaves three spines without bodies.

The mass of material representing the crushed vertebrae is very largely composed of fibrous tissue without any attempt at ossification. The destructive process has evidently ceased to advance in an upward direction, for the half body remaining above is quite hard and when fresh showed no hyperæmia. Inferiorly, however, there is still evidence of activity of the disease, as is shown by the partial absorption of the fibro-cartilaginous disc next below, and by the presence on its upper side of granulation tissue which is still to be seen in the specimen. On the whole, however, the process has reached a stage of comparative quiescence, and it is probable that no further bone destruction would have taken place.

The fact that there is no sign of calcification of the fibrous tissue which has taken the place of the destroyed vertebrae is interesting from the standpoint of treatment. After two years of comparatively efficient treatment there is no evidence of attempt at bony union, and the spine is freely movable at the area of disease. From the appearance of the specimen it seems probable that bony union would never take place even after total disappearance of the tuberculous condition. Of course, there are plenty of examples in which bony union has occurred,

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