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Original Communications.

HIP JOINT DISEASE.*

BY J. FERGUSON, B.A., M.B., L.R.C.P.

The form of the disease that I purpose bringing before your notice to-day is that occurring in the young, and in boys rather more frequently than in girls. Many opinions have been expressed as to the real cause of this serious affection, and if my remarks to-day should call the attention of this learned assembly of those who practice the healing art, to what I really believe is an important cause of this malady, and that it may lead to improved views in treatment, I shall be amply rewarded.

Now, I do not mean that the cause I intend bringing before you is the only cause. That some cases arise, as is now held, in disease of the os innominatum or femur, or in the synovial membrane is, I think, true. The head of the femur, the synovial membrane, the round ligament, struma, and tuberculosis have been claimed by different authors. Barwell, in his work on the diseases of joints, says that no one ever heard of knee-joint disease arising out of the crucial ligaments, and why in the round ligament? He must be very ignorant of the true anatomy of the ligamentum teres if he compares it with the crucial ligaments in the knee joint.

The real truth is that the ligamentum teres carries the weight of the body sus-

ended on the head of the femur. This is a well-known fact in anatomy, first brought out, and impressed on the minds of his students, by that brilliant anatomist, Dr. Richardson. But it has never been made any use of in explaining the cause of hip joint disease. Now it occurred to me that, if this ligament should be lengthened from any cause, it would permit the head of the femur to press hard against the upper part of the acetabulum; and, as a result of this pressure, and the consequent friction, active inflammation would ensue. It is well known to anatomists that the ligamentum teres is sometimes very small, and imperfectly developed. Further, it is known that in cases where it is so the hip is a weak joint in consequence of a lengthened ligamentum teres as has been shown by some careful dissections of this joint in persons who died of some other trouble, and who were known to complain of many of the symptoms of hip disease.

This ligament may be congenitally somewhat longer than it normally is; and during early life when those great changes are taking place in the development of the bones that enter into the formation of the hip-joint, the head of the femur and the acetabulum are brought into contact, and disease lighted up by very trifling causes, as cold, slight injury, and such like. Again, the ligaments of any joint may become relaxed, from a relaxed and weakened condition of the body generally. Now in no ligament, would we expect to find this

* Read before the Ontario Medical Association, June, 1883.