

In the third volume of Brodie's miscellaneous works is a description of what he calls "dry or white gangrene of the skin." A portion of skin of the size of a shilling, or larger, dies, and turns white, or dries in an amber-colored, horny slough, and is separated by ulceration; the wound heals, but a succession of these mortified patches follow one another, and seem interminable. He gives three cases, and showed in lecture a wax model of one of them; all the patients were young women with anæmia and irregular menstruation; little is said of the treatment pursued except that it was not very effectual, and the patients left the hospital and were lost sight of.

How many of us have ever seen a case of white gangrene of the skin? One such came under my notice long ago, when I was house-surgeon at University College Hospital. It tallied exactly with Brodie's description; piece after piece of skin about the size of a shilling or half-a-crown turned white, necrosed and was separated, and the wound healed. The patient was a young woman, and she was the object of great attention by the surgeons and the students because of this rare and peculiar disease, and because, too, she was very good-looking. She stayed in the hospital many months, then she left, and was lost sight of for a time. At length the history of the case was completed; she became an in-patient of the Brighton Hospital; there suspicion arose, a watch was set on her, and the cause of the disease—which in London was explained by some ingenious hypothesis in more than one clinical lecture—was found to be a penny-worth of strong sulphuric acid and a glass rod! She was ignominiously expelled from the hospital, and I believe she committed suicide soon after.

I have always thought that Brodie's white gangrene of the skin had no better foundation as to its etiology than, and probably the same as, existed in this case. I may, however, be mistaken, and I give this opinion with diffidence; but if I am right—if so astute, so careful, and so experienced an observer as Sir B. Brodie was mistaken—we may all take comfort in the reflection that neither age, learning, nor experience can prevent occasional error. The older we grow the more wary do we become; we know the pitfalls into which we may fall and probably often have fallen; whereas the young practitioner, who has not yet been much confronted with his own blunders, with the enthusiasm of youth and the complete teaching of the schools, is apt to be more sure of his opinion, more free in expressing it, and therefore more frequently in error. This, however, I may say, quoting the witty words of the late Master of Trinity College, "We are none of us infallible, not even the youngest."—William Cadge, F. R. C. S. in *Br. Med Jour.*

## THE INFLUENCE OF MATERIAL IMPRESSIONS UPON THE FŒTUS.

Although the belief in the influence of the maternal impressions upon the fœtus, which has existed long ago among all people, has found, and still finds, strong support from the greatest philosophers and most celebrated physicians, the subject has not yet found a proper place in science, being relegated to the region of delusions and fantastic fables. In the first place, the general belief in the influence of material impressions upon the fœtus found many opponents in the beginning of the eighteenth century, who began to prove that as between the mother and fœtus there exists no nervous connection; all such cases, principally connected by Sachs, Schroeck, Haller, and others, were either merely accidental or inherited. Afterward, however, the German writers made far weightier objection, namely, that every deformity, as the result of embryological defect, must be developed during a certain period of time, and for this reason cannot be the result of a momentary impression acting on the mind of the pregnant woman.

Nevertheless there have appeared from time to time, especially in the English and American papers, descriptions of cases seeming to prove the possibility of such influence of maternal impressions upon the fœtus. And what still more deserves our attention is that many of these descriptions are given by men who are known as conscientious investigators and critical observers. It is sufficient to mention the works of W. S. Lowman, T. Wetherby, Thomas Hedman, and many others, in which this subject has again been raised with great carefulness and criticism, and therefore we cannot yet regard this interesting and enigmatic subject as closed.

It is to be understood that by maternal impressions we do not mean the defects of development manifested by an arrest of the organism in the beginning of the embryologic state, but rather cases in which the psychical impressions are stamped on the development of the fœtus.

The following case, observed by myself, directed my attention to this question:

The wife of one of my friends, being in the second month of pregnancy, was frightened by the wound of her little son, four years of age, which he received on the forehead from a fall against the edge of a clothes-press. The wound, however, was not dangerous, but it alarmed the mother. In due course she was delivered of a female child, who had in the same place a red scar, showing the exact resemblance of that of her brother's.

Professor L. Neugebauer described, in a Polish