

CASES

WHICH OCCURRED IN THE

PRACTICE OF JAMES BROWN, Esq.

SURGEON, DOMINICA ;

CHIEFLY ILLUSTRATIVE OF CERTAIN MORBID PREPARATIONS PRESENTED BY HIM TO THE MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF EDINBURGH.

Communicated by R. HAMILTON, M. D. Keeper of the
Museum.

THE preparations of which the following cases contain the history, were forwarded from Dominica by the gentleman in whose practice they occurred, to the care of my respected friend Mr James Law, with directions that they should be presented to the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons; and they were accordingly delivered to me by Mr Law last autumn.

In the month of May I had the pleasure of seeing Mr Brown himself, who then furnished me with the following *Cases*, written upon loose sheets torn from his case-book, where they had been regularly recorded as they occurred.

The cases do not connect with or illustrate each other, as every one of them bears on a department of pathology different from the rest. They have all, however, a considerable degree of individual interest, and some of them are very singular.

The cases are given in Mr Brown's own words; but I have taken the liberty to preface several of them with a single introductory remark.

The first Case is an example of very *extensive ossification of the Dura Mater*, accompanied with coagula of blood in the substance of the brain,—the result of hæmorrhage from some of its vessels, and the cause of paralysis.

CASE I.

Mamiett, a free woman of colour, æt. 40, early in the month of March began to complain of headache, which was shortly followed by dimness of sight, so that she was afraid of losing it. These symptoms continued more or less till the 25th of the month, when she was seized with a fit of apoplexy. For this she was bled, blistered, and put upon a course of calomel and opium. For five days she lay nearly insensible, although she took what was offered to her, and even attempted to speak. After this she began to recover, but with almost the total loss of the left side. She was speedily put upon a course of tonics and sea-bathing, and was so well on the

12th of April, though still labouring under partial hæmiplegia, as to require no further attendance.

She continued to enjoy pretty good health during the summer, although subject to occasional headache and dimness of sight, the eyes at the same time having a curious indescribable appearance.

On the 20th of August, she was seized with violent pain of the head and neck, and now lost the use of the right side. The head fell down on the right shoulder, and she had no power to raise it. At the same time, she answered every person distinctly, and could take nourishment and medicines when offered her. Under the same treatment as that employed in the former attack, she so far recovered as to be able to sit up and converse with her friends. On the 5th of September, however, she was suddenly seized with convulsions, and died.

Dissection.—The skull-cap separated easily. The dura mater appeared as if forced upwards, by a number of small hard tumors running along on each side of the longitudinal sinus. On inverting it, extensive ossification was found on the dura mater and falx, extending from the crista-galli to the tentorium. On the right side, the bony deposition extends to 3 inches, and on the left $2\frac{1}{2}$. It is composed of irregular shaped spiculæ, from $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, and as much in breadth: some of the spiculæ are about a quarter of an inch in thickness. The dura mater appeared in a state of high inflammation, and the pia mater very vascular. External appearance of the brain natural.

The right ventricle contained about ʒj. of limpid serum. The plexus choroides, enlarged and hardened. Septum lucidum much thickened, and of a brownish-grey appearance. At the superior margin of the ventricle, in the corpus callosum, and descending towards the thalami, a sac was observed, containing about half an ounce of coagulated blood, and a little pus. On opening the left ventricle, about half an ounce of limpid serum immediately escaped, and this was followed by some bloody matter. On more freely exposing the ventricle, an abscess was discovered, just ready to burst, which was found to contain 3 or 4 oz. of blood and sanious matter. When this was removed, the lateral and inferior portions of the hemisphere were much broken down, and as thin as a shell. The cerebellum was sound, and a considerable quantity of blood was found in the base of the cranium under the tentorium.

The next Case may be denominated *Rupture of the Heart*, as, on dissection, the pericardium was found full of blood. It is singular, not only as occurring in a child four years of age, without any previous symptom, but especially from its being a rupture of the pulmonic artery, the first, so far as I know, that is put on record. In six out of eight unpublished cases, with which I have become acquainted, the rupture was at the root of the aorta. I

may here notice a singular specimen of rupture, from external violence, presented by Dr John Gairdner to the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. A cart-wheel had passed over the body of a child, æt. 10: not a rib was broken; but, upon dissection, the heart was found nearly completely divided into two halves*.

CASE II.

Celeste, a little black girl, about 4 years old, on the forenoon of June 10. 1818, was playing about in perfect health with the other children. Her

* Dr Gairdner has kindly favoured me with a copy of the notes of this case, which cannot be read without interest.

“ The dissection was performed by me on the 12th July 1815. The subject was a girl of ten years of age, and I was informed that her death had been occasioned by the wheel of a loaded cart having passed over her body the preceding day. Immediately before the wheel went over her, she gave a scream, but her death was quite instantaneous, for she was never afterwards heard to utter any sound whatever.

“ There was scarcely any perceptible trace of the impression of the wheel externally, and no subcutaneous extravasation, except a very slight one under the left nipple. The abdomen, which was first examined, was perfectly natural.

“ In the thorax the only deviation from the healthy state was rupture of the heart, with extensive laceration of its substance. Both ventricles, and both auricles, were laid open by the laceration, and the septum torn to shreds. About one-half of the substance of the heart had burst a way for itself through the pericardium into the right cavity of the thorax, where it was found immersed in a very large quantity of grumous blood, and still attached to the other part by means of a small portion near to the apex, where the rent had stopped.

“ Not

mother took her up, and placed her on her knee, when, without the least notice, she dropt lifeless to the ground.

Dissection.—The pericardium was found full of blood. On examining for the orifice, it was found in the pulmonic artery, immediately after it immerges from the ventricle. It appeared as if the different coats of the artery had been gradually separated, and a slow and gradual ulceration had produced the orifice, which was large enough to admit a common quill. She had enjoyed excellent health previously to her death, and I saw her the same morning with no complaint whatever.

The 3d Case may be regarded as a case of death from Lumbrici; where the disorder produced upon the frame at large was very great. The lumbrici had taken possession of the stomach and intestines, and had penetrated into the liver. Dr Baillie represents the occurrence of worms in the liver as hypothetical. He mentions, that they had been said to occur in cysts, and in the biliary ducts. In the present case, some were found in the gall-bladder.

“ Not a single rib was in the slightest degree injured, nor any other injury done, with the exception of a slight bruise of each ankle, inflicted by the foot of the horse before the wheel had passed over the child's body.

“ The urinary bladder was found completely contracted, and quite hard.”

My friend Professor Turner and I examined the preparation carefully, with the view of ascertaining the precise situation of the lumbrici in the liver, and it appeared that they were confined to the vessels of the vena portæ.

CASE III.

January 1819.—Charlotte, a black, æt. 9 years, had all her life been a delicate child. Came from the country much emaciated, with face and lower extremities œdematous. She had brought up several lumbrici before she came to town. Calomel was prescribed, to bring off the worms, and cordials to support the strength. She vomited 100 large lumbrici, some of them upwards of 10 inches long, between the 2d and the 22d of January, the day on which she died.

Dissection.—The dura mater adhered firmly to the cranium, and was in a state of great vascularity. There was a considerable quantity of coagulable lymph between the tunica arachnoidea and the pia mater. The substance of the brain was much softer than usual. The cerebellum hard. Much serum surrounded the medulla spinalis, and when the head was lowered, a quantity to the extent of $5\frac{1}{2}$ oz. oozed out.

The lungs were highly vascular, and generally adhering to the pleura costalis, and collapsed. On passing the hand over the lower parts of the ribs, and superior portion of the diaphragm, it gave the sensation as if passing over carious bone. On more

minute examination, this was found to be produced by small bony substances about the size of millet-seeds.

The pericardium was full of water; the heart enlarged, and much more soft and flaccid than natural; the coronary vessels enlarged.

The peritoneum was in a state of high inflammation. About 6 oz. of fluid in the abdominal cavity. The mesenteric glands were much enlarged. The spleen, kidneys, and bladder highly vascular. The internal coats of the stomach and bowels were much inflamed, and several parts of the ilium and jejunum were studded with gangrenous spots. The stomach and bowels contained 90 lumbrici. The liver appeared much collapsed, and adhered to the diaphragm and ribs. On examination, it felt hard and scirrhus externally. On cutting it, the hard surfaces proved to be large lumbrici, coiled in its substance; 5 were removed, the remaining 11 are left in the preparation. It will be observed, that the worms passed before death, and those contained in the stomach, bowels and liver, *post mortem*, amount in all to 206 in number.

The 4th Case is a case of great enlargement, suppuration, and ulceration of the liver, in a child aged 12 months. 9

CASE IV.

June 1817.—Jennetta, a child negress, æt. 12 months, has been subject to a diarrhœa for two months; with worms, several of which she has passed; and the occasional appearance of bloody stools. Her mother died when she was 4 months old, since which time she has been brought up on spoon-meat. Although I had occasionally seen the child, yet not suspecting any affection of the liver in so young a patient, I did not think of examining the abdomen attentively till the day before her death, when, to my astonishment, I found the liver much enlarged and hard; the margin extending down as low as the umbilicus. The body generally was much emaciated.

Dissection.—On exposing the abdominal cavity, the first morbid appearance that attracted notice was the peritoneum adhering firmly to the scrobiculus cordis. On the surface of the liver, in the right, and still more, in the left lobe, deep ulceration, about the size of a dollar, was next observed. The right lobe, immediately under the margin of the ribs, was much inflamed, and was the seat of an abscess, containing about 3 oz. of a bloody matter, rather thin in consistence. The stomach, bowels, and other viscera, were sound.

The 5th Case is regarded by Mr Brown as unique. Many large sarcomatous tumors were found in the abdomen and thorax, more or less connected with the viscera. Six or eight connected with the abdominal viscera were sent to the Museum. The largest measures 16 inches in circumference, and weighs about 22 ounces. The short history of the case is translated from a letter of the French Medical attendant, addressed to Mr Brown. Mr Brown was himself present at the dissection.

CASE V.

1815.—Negro Felix, in the month of June, was seized with pain in the right shoulder, extending down the side, which was exceedingly violent for 24 hours. It subsided gradually, and by the fourth day had nearly disappeared. Some days thereafter swelling of the abdomen appeared, particularly in the hypogastric region. His appetite failed, and a total disgust for food succeeded. He took but one meal a-day, and this was followed by great increase of the swelling. Emaciation rapidly supervened. In the beginning of September, the abdomen being much swollen, he was tapped, and after the water was evacuated, large hard masses were felt in every part of the abdomen.

Dissection was performed on the 28th October 1815. The water was first drawn off from the ab-

domen, and many indurated substances were felt floating within the cavity. On opening the abdomen, the tumors were found extensively distributed amongst the viscera. The omentum was nearly obliterated, but had some large tumors in its folds. Others were connected with the spleen, stomach, arch of the colon, and mesentery, and extended from one side of the abdomen to the other. Others, but of a smaller size, dipt down along the rectum; and some were afterwards found on the pericardium and lungs. The tumors were irregular in shape; firm and fleshy in consistence, and of a cineritious colour. The structure of the liver was much changed, and had an appearance nearly resembling the floating tumors. This viscus extended into the left hypochondrium. The bloodvessels of the mesentery were much enlarged. A sac, containing coagulated blood, was attached to the stomach. The spleen, kidneys, and remaining viscera, were otherwise sound.

The last case to which I have to call the attention of the Society, is one bearing more upon Physiology than Pathology. It is one of those cases in which the skin of the negro is changed from its natural black to a white colour.

Cases of this description appear to be very uncommon. Of the six cases, which, so far as I know, are all that have been recorded, three occurred in childhood.

Dr Pritchard speaks of the one which he saw in Demerara as one of the most remarkable natural curiosities in the colony, or perhaps in the West Indies. (Notes on the West Indies, Letter 29th.) It occurred in a female, aged 30, in perfect health, without any apparent cause. The change had been six years in progress, and was far from complete.

CASE VI.

10th April 1819.—Samuel Herd, æt. 50, had an operation performed on him in January 1818, from which he perfectly recovered. Many months afterwards, he came asking for something for his skin, as it was becoming white, and the other negroes, he stated, laughed at him. His bodily health was excellent; and he was peculiarly free from asthma, to which he had been subject. States, that after the operation, and the healing of the parts, the cicatrix remained white; and much about the same time other parts became white also, especially the hands and feet. The whitening began on the back of the hand, and gradually extended up the fore-arm, till now it is nearly all white. The same process is going on in the lower extremities. The feet, legs, thighs and hips, are now almost all white. Some white spots show themselves on the back and shoulders, and about half the breast is of the same colour. A broad white ring surrounds the penis, and a considerable part of the scrotum is affected.

16th June.—The change is still going on. There is now a large white spot on the lower part of the

abdomen, and half the penis has changed colour. The head, too, is now nearly white, and is seen shining through the dark curly hair. Has still occasional paroxysms of asthma.

10th September.—Change still making progress, but not so rapidly as at first. His skin is acquiring a more natural appearance; on comparing his hand with that of a white somewhat sun-burnt, you could not distinguish it. Is still enjoying perfect health.

May 1820.—Since last report the progress of the change has been very obvious. The lower extremities, including the nates, almost of a natural white, with the exception of some patches of a bluish tint. The hands, and arms as high as the deltoid, entirely white. The skin on the shoulders and breasts of a pale ash-colour. The head completely white, and discernible at a distance through the black woolly hair. The ears, eye-lids, and skin round the eyes, the forehead, and *alæ nasi*, changing very fast. The lips of a particularly bright vermilion-colour. The breast, abdomen, and back speckled. The skin on the back which has not changed, is black and shining.

September 22d.—Continues to change, and every day appears to make an alteration. The extremities are now of a natural white appearance.