

The Nursing of Children's Diseases.

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(Continued from page 124.)

LECTURE X.

Acute Nephritis, or acute Bright's disease, is the name given to acute inflammation of the kidneys; it is a fairly common disease in children, and may be due to cold, or to some acute fevers, especially scarlet fever or diphtheria. It begins in some cases with fever, thirst, and frequent micturition, while in other cases the first symptom may be a puffiness of the face or eyelids, due to commencing dropsy. The urine will be found to be high-coloured, and often red or smoky from the presence of blood; the amount is much decreased, and the specific gravity high, while on boiling there is a precipitate of albumen, generally in large amount, the urine occasionally boiling quite solid. Occasionally there is vomiting with or without diarrhoea, and in some cases so-called "uræmic symptoms" may come on, such as subnormal temperature, frequent vomiting and diarrhoea, hæmorrhage from the nose, muscular twitchings, and perhaps general convulsions; such symptoms indicate the greatest danger. Again, sometimes the heart fails, and this may occur quite suddenly, the patient sitting up to play with his toys and having a sudden attack of shortness of breath, with pale face, and falling back dead. Pleurisy, inflammation of the lungs, etc., may come on, and are very grave complications.

In some cases the albumen lessens in quantity and the blood disappears, the urine becomes normal and the dropsy decreases, and in a month or two the child appears quite well; in others the albumen remains in the urine, the dropsy continues in small amount, the child gets more and more anæmic, and finally the child dies, some complication, as pleurisy or pneumonia, appearing during the last week of life.

The great principle of treatment is to give the diseased kidneys as much rest as possible, and as the products must be got rid of in some way, we must ensure as much action as possible of the skin and bowels, for through these some of the waste products of the body may be excreted. We can also lessen the work of the

kidney by giving a food which contains as little as possible of albumen or nitrogenous material because the waste product of this food is almost exclusively excreted by the kidneys. The child should be kept in bed, between blankets, and the night-clothes should be of woollen material; the temperature of the room should be kept even and rather warm, in order to increase the action of the skin. The bowels should be kept freely open by some laxative. The diet should consist exclusively of milk and barley water, and the child should be encouraged to drink freely of barley water, or Imperial drink made by dissolving a drachm of acid tartrate of potash and half-an-ounce of sugar in a pint of boiling water, and cooling. By these methods the skin can usually be induced to act freely, but if this is not the case hot packs, *i.e.*, a flannel blanket wrung out of hot water, should be freely used, and these also do good by drawing away the blood from the kidneys and lessening their congestion. Some physicians recommend a hypodermic injection of pilocarpin, which usually causes profuse sweating and salivation. Hot poultices to the loins, or dry cupping are useful in some cases, where the amount of urine passed is very small in amount, they act by relieving the congestion of the kidneys. If muscular twitchings occur, the medical attendant should be at once summoned, as such symptoms are of very bad omen.

Chronic Nephritis or chronic Bright's disease may arise from causes similar to those which cause acute disease, or it may follow acute nephritis. Its symptoms for some time are very insidious, a child may be in apparent health but appear anæmic and puffy in the face, and on examination large quantities of albumen may be found in the urine. In more marked cases the dropsy may be very evident and perhaps extreme, occurring in the abdominal or thoracic cavities as well as under the skin. There may be headache and vomiting, and perhaps uræmic symptoms. These cases may gradually improve, the dropsy and the albuminuria both disappearing, but very frequently the improvement is but temporary, the symptoms return and the dropsy increases, then either pneumonia, pleurisy or heart failure come on, or the urine diminishes in amount, and the child gets more and more apathetic and finally comatose, when death ends the scene. The nursing and general treatment of chronic nephritis are on the lines of that of the acute disease, rest in bed until

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)