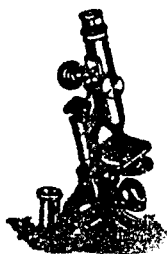


Medical Matters.

PREMONITORY EVIDENCES OF LOCOMOTOR ATAXIA.



Dr. Fournier, in an American journal gives the following as early signs of locomotor ataxia :

1. Westphal's sign is known to consist in the abolition of the patellar tendon reflex, and is present in two-thirds of the cases.

2. Romberg's sign can be thus appreciated. The eye is an indirect regulator of motion. It helps to correct deviation and maintains equilibrium. When a patient is suspected of incipient ataxia it will often be sufficient to make him close his eyes when in the erect position to verify the diagnosis. In a few instances, his body will oscillate, and if the malady is somewhat advanced he will be in danger of falling.

3. The "stairs" symptom. One of the first and most constant symptoms of incipient locomotor ataxia is the difficulty with which the patient will descend stairs. If questioned closely on the subject, he will say that at the very outset of his malady he was always afraid of falling when coming downstairs.

4. The manner in which a patient crosses his legs is often significant. In the normal state, a man when performing that act lifts one leg simply to the height necessary to pass it over the other, whereas in the affection under consideration he lifts it higher than necessary, describing a large segment of a circle.

5. Walking at the word of command. The patient seated is told to get up and walk instantly. After rising he will hesitate, as if he wanted to find his equilibrium before starting off. If, while in motion, he is told to stop short, his body, obeying the impulsion, inclines forward as if about to salute, or, on the contrary, he jerks himself backward in order to resist the impulsion forward.

6. The patient is asked to stand on one leg, at first with the eyes open, afterwards closed. Although man is not made for this position yet he can balance himself pretty firmly for a little while; but the ataxic will experience a great deal of difficulty, and will instinctively call to his aid his other foot, so as not to fall. If his eyes are closed, he will not be able to stand.

As a matter of fact, the signs numbered 3 and 2 are the first definite indications of ataxy, but even these are usually preceded for some weeks by the "lightning like" pains in the legs which indicate the commencement of the spinal nerve disease.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF QUININE.

The Germans are now commencing to realise some of the difficulties connected with the work of colonisation, and are carrying out their researches into details of that work with the customary thoroughness of their race. Englishmen have been contented to discover that quinine was an excellent treatment and preventive of malaria. The Germans have investigated the why and the wherefore of the treatment in a much more scientific manner, and the results have recently been published in a German report. The observations were made in 1904 and 1905 upon the German troops in South West Africa, Quinine being administered to each of the men as far as possible. The drug was given in doses of one gramme ($15\frac{1}{2}$ grains) each Thursday and Friday at eight to half-past eight o'clock at night, in order that the unpleasant after effects might be got over during sleep. In spite of this, however, in many cases, the dose had to be reduced, and one gramme was given on Thursday, and half a gramme on Friday. It was found that when the drug was taken at intervals of ten or eleven days it did not give protection against malaria. Blackwater fever did not develop in any case as a result of the drug, but patients with recent scurvy showed fresh and extensive hæmorrhages in the skin on the day after taking quinine. The best results were obtained from the powdered hydrochlorate of quinine given in cachets or dissolved in weak hydrochloric acid. It was found that the best results were obtained when the bitter taste of the drug could be hidden—and gelatine capsules were, therefore, generally adopted; when the quinine was taken every seventh and eighth day; and when it was administered in the morning before breakfast—so that it was most rapidly absorbed. The German doctors introduced a "Quinine calendar" for each man on which the days for him to take the drug were marked. It was found that, with the regular dosage, attacks of malaria were minimised, that the administration could be continued for long periods of time, and that no permanent injury was in any instance caused. These results, although they only corroborate, for the most part, those at which English colonists arrived years ago in a rough-and-ready way, are valuable, and should be carefully remembered. It is especially interesting for nurses in this country, who only see comparatively small doses of the drug given to patients, and who know how frequently doses of five grains are followed by headache and ringing in the ears, to know that the malarious patient can take large and repeated doses without any such effect.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)