

HOMŒOPATHY AND THE INFANT.*

By DOUGLAS M. BORLAND, M.B., Ch.B. Glas.

At the beginning of another session of the teaching of homœopathy I think it is worth our while to consider what we are attempting to do, and why.

The educational facilities provided in this Hospital have been designed in order to supply to any inquirer a comprehensive training in the principles of homœopathy, and the practical application of these principles in the treatment of the sick.

For the establishment of this teaching centre, the only teaching centre in the country, we are indebted to the generosity of believers in homœopathy. The funds are vested in the Honyman Gillespie Trust, the Compton Burnett Bequest, the Sir Henry Tyler Scholarship Fund and the Tutorial Fund of the Hospital. Each of these concerns itself with part of the subject, and together supply all that is necessary to enable any inquiring medical man or woman to equip himself for the practice of homœopathy.

That is what we are attempting to do.

Now let us consider why. Put briefly, the reason is that we believe that by treatment which is dictated by homœopathic principles it is possible to do more for the relief and cure of the sick than by any other form of treatment of which we have any knowledge. That is the belief on which we act, and because of which we are eager to teach to others what we ourselves have learned.

I am convinced by actual experience in the treatment of the sick that this belief is well founded, and am taking this opportunity, on the eve of retiral from the charge of the Children's Department of this Hospital, to review the powers that homœopathy supplies in this branch of medicine. I shall hope to demonstrate the integrity of these convictions by considering the medical care of the child during its first two years of life.

The care of the child takes cognizance not merely of the physical, but also of the mental, health and development. This begins, not

* A lecture introductory to the Educational Course at the London Homœopathic Hospital, Season 1928-29.

at the time of birth but *in utero*. It is essential to guard the health, mental and physical, of the mother during pregnancy, if the best possible child is to be born. There are various disabilities from which the mother may suffer which have an adverse effect on the unborn infant. Some are conditions peculiar to pregnancy, others are ailments which attack the pregnant and non-pregnant indiscriminately.

Let us take first a few of the conditions peculiar to pregnancy. On the physical side we have excessive vomiting, albuminuria, constipation with toxic absorption, or diarrhœa. On the mental side there are such things as undue depression, morbid fears, sleeplessness and the effects of frights.

In this sphere what has homœopathy to offer in advance of ordinary medicine?

Excessive vomiting of pregnancy, if allowed to continue, will lead to the death of the foetus, either naturally, or artificially induced in order to save the life of the mother. The recognized treatment of this condition consists of rest in bed, greatly modified diet, bordering on starvation, the administration of sedatives and aperients, and, when the condition has become more grave, the administration of glucose. In a very large percentage of cases, when the vomiting of pregnancy starts, a few doses of ipecac. will completely control it. The danger is prevented and does not need to be met. In these unfortunate cases in which the condition has not been homœopathically treated from the start, the response to the homœopathic drug is startling, though the choice of the drug is more difficult and is dictated by the symptoms of the individual case.

Albuminuria of pregnancy is one of the terrors of the obstetrician. It is one of the great danger signals, one of the signs that the strain is telling on the mother, and through her on the child. It is the precursor of convulsions with all their horrors and anxieties. The orthodox treatment consists of the taking of salts, drinking of large quantities of bland fluids to try to eliminate the toxic materials, and the restriction of the diet to white foods, semi-solids or fluids, according to the severity of the case, in order to minimise the strain on the kidneys, excretory organs which get rid of the body's waste products. And yet, in different cases, I have seen apis, plumbum, phos. acid, or terebinth remove the albumin from the

urine, without any purgation, and with the patient taking a full diet.

Constipation in pregnancy is a common trouble. Where it exists toxic absorption is bound to follow, and while it persists the patient is in danger of the severer complications due to infection by the *Bacillus coli*. The treatment of constipation has greatly improved during the last few years, but still leaves much to be desired. In the great majority of cases a few doses of nux, or opium, or alumina will put matters right, provided the mother's diet is rational.

Diarrhœa in pregnancy is always a serious matter, and if not speedily relieved may lead to miscarriage. Is the allopathic administration of a dose of ol. ric., followed or not by an intestinal sedative, to be preferred to the gentle action of a small dose of aloes, or podoph., or mere., with its instantaneous sense of relief?

On the mental side the effects of morbid states in the mother have a very definite effect on the fetus. One has only to study the children of the war years to see what effects these can produce on the unborn child. The ordinary treatment consists of the administration of regular doses of bromide in the fond belief that it has no effect on the child. I have seen the child of a mother, so treated, covered with a bromide rash, a sign of bromide poisoning, within a week of its birth. Surely there is more to be done than that! The morbid depression will fade away after the judicious administration of puls., aurum, or sepia. Fears lose their terror under the action of aconite, ars., arg. nit., ign., or one of the kindred drugs. Sleep returns to the weary mother helped by acon., bell., coff., nux, &c., and the fright loses its evil effect under the sedative influence of acon., ignat., op., phos., puls., &c. The mother's nervous system has not been dulled, nor has the unborn infant been poisoned by any of these drugs.

I shall not spend time over the intercurrent ailments, influenzas, coughs, pneumonias, &c., to which all of us are prone. Here we have, in exaggerated form, the question of the relative value of homœopathy and orthodox medicine in the treatment of acute disease. For this I have not space at present.

The next factor seriously affecting the well-being of the child is its birth. Here there are great possibilities of injury; unavoidable

injury at the hands of the most skilful attendant, due to the necessity for manipulation or instruments, or injury due to prolonged and difficult labour, without any outside interference. These injuries may be to limbs or much more serious, may involve intracranial hæmorrhages and consequent brain damage.

There are two problems to be considered here ; first, how to avoid the risk, if possible, and second, what can be done for the infant who is suffering from the effects of a difficult labour.

It is an experience common to homœopathic doctors everywhere, who are conducting a general practice, that their patients do not suffer from difficult labour. That does not prove anything, but it is a fortunate fact for the patients. There are two factors which have a bearing on this happy experience. A pregnant woman who is treated throughout her pregnancy with homœopathic medicines will approach her confinement freed from the physical and mental ailments which so often are factors in the production of an unsatisfactory confinement. Secondly, there is a drug—caulophyllum - which has the power of regulating the processes of labour. This is a fact which was known and used by homœopaths many years ago, and is equally true to-day.

I have a patient, recently confined of her first child. Years ago her mother, was given caulo. before this patient was born. Now the patient herself was put on caulo. before the birth of her child. During her confinement she was attended by an obstetrician of very wide experience. She had a large child and it was her first pregnancy, labour had started, and she was examined. The attending lady gynecologist said that everything was going well, but that many hours must elapse before anything could be done to help, and went off home. She got into her own door as the telephone bell rang, asking her to return at once, and got back to the nursing home just in time to see the child born. The mother was saved trouble, forceps delivery, hours of suffering, and prolonged labour with its increased danger for the child. She had been taking small doses of caulo, daily for a month before. Coincidence, perhaps, but a coincidence one has come to expect.

Let us consider the unfortunate children born after a difficult

labour. These fall roughly into two classes, the blue or asphyxiated, and the pale or collapsed.

Consider first the child with blue asphyxia. There is no mechanical obstruction, but he does not breathe. Surface stimulation does not produce the desired effect, or does this for a very short time only. Very soon the pulse begins to fail. Everyone is becoming just a little anxious. Unpleasant thoughts begin to suggest themselves. Thoughts of the mother and all she has just come through, thoughts of the father waiting for news, begin to force their way through. A dose of laurocerasus and the whole scene is changed, the child breathes and then cries.

The pale collapsed child is less dramatic and more pitiful. It lies limp, flaccid, cold. Its heart sounds are hardly to be heard. It is all but dead. Warmth, stimulants, friction, seem to produce no response. The child lies as one drowned. Carb. veg. will give that child back, alive, into its mother's arms.

There is yet another condition sometimes met with. The child is born after some difficulty, and seems to be doing well, but in a few days it is reported to be not quite right. It may be that an arm or a leg is rather limp, is not used properly, or the face seems somewhat asymmetrical, or there is some difficulty in sucking. There has been some intracranial hæmorrhage. A little arnica will help the absorption of the blood and induce the maximum recovery of the damaged nerve tissue.

Now that the child has entered the world, the first consideration is the supply of suitable nourishment. Everyone is agreed that, where possible, breast-feeding is the ideal for the new-born infant. There are many mothers who, with the best will in the world, have been unable to nurse their babies. The trouble may be due to scanty secretion, milk of a low grade, or milk which is poisonous to the child, and this may persist in spite of all accessory measures which are employed to help matters. And yet a little belladonna, phytolacca, or pulsatilla is often all that is necessary to establish a free flow of healthy, nourishing milk; or a little calc. or lac. def. all that is required to bring the milk which was so poor in quality up to the required standard; or a little nat. c. or sil. all that the mother needed to change her milk from poison to food.

In the first few months of life the difficulties with which one is liable to have to contend are mainly digestive. They take the form of inability to digest satisfactorily ordinary milk as shown by vomiting, diarrhœa, or constipation. The amount of labour and skill which is expended in trying to find a suitable food mixture for the child with a delicate digestion is almost beyond belief. We are never without some such cases in hospital. And yet these infants, I should say without exception, go home taking a milk mixture, not a patent food. They have been carefully fed, but in addition they have had homœopathic treatment, which enables them to take normal food. I have lost count of the infants of whom it was said that milk upset them, and who have gone straight ahead on a milk diet with some *æthusa*, *sil.*, *nat. c.*, or *calc.* The vomiting ceases, the stools become normal, and the constipation disappears.

Of all the ailments of early life the most deadly is acute infantile diarrhœa. The number of its victims must run into thousands each year. I remember looking at an infant shortly after its admission to the ward with acute diarrhœa, and remarking that I did not like its chances. I was looked at with surprise, and greeted with the remark, "But we don't lose acute diarrhœas." The statement was not strictly accurate, but a knowledge of the power of homœopathic drugs does remove the dread with which one otherwise would approach an epidemic of these cases. I have seen an infant admitted to the ward when it seemed hardly worth while to attempt to do anything at all, and in a few hours under the action of minute doses of *ars.* the child has improved beyond recognition. So often has this happened that now no case can be looked on as hopeless so long as one knows of the powers of such drugs as *ars.*, *merc.*, *aloes*, *podoph.*, *croton oil* and *sulph.* when administered according to homœopathic indications.

In the course of development of the infant the next milestone is the eruption of the first tooth. Teething, in the healthy child, is a perfectly natural process and is unaccompanied by any disturbance. Unfortunately, the majority of the children who come under the observation of the physician are not perfectly healthy, and teething is liable to be accompanied by all sorts of disturbances. We are all familiar with the teething child with swollen tender

gums, who salivates freely, and whose fingers and hand, at times it looks almost as if the whole arm, are pushed into its mouth for relief. Or the child may be so desperately irritable that the whole household is distracted. Incision of the swollen gums and the administration of sedatives cannot be compared with the immediate and lasting change produced by the action of a little homœopathic cham.

There is another ailment of childhood which can shatter the morale of a whole family—infantile croup. It is a fearsome spectacle. The child sitting up in terror, rapidly becoming purple, blue or black in the face, unable to draw a breath, starting to twitch, it may be becoming convulsed. No wonder the family is terrified, especially as the attack tends to recur. The ordinary treatment of such a condition consists in the administration of an emetic, hot fomentations applied to the neck and the use of a steam kettle. Instead, after the administration of a little acon.,-spong., or hep., the infant will be peacefully asleep in a few minutes and the attack will not recur.

In a similar way one might take up and consider the other illnesses of infancy such as bronchitis, pneumonia, the various skin diseases, and the acute infections, and contrast the methods of treatment in the two schools of medicine; but I think I have said enough in the way of illustration, and there is another branch of the subject with which I would like to deal.

Till quite recently the infant who was not suffering from any recognizable disease, but who, in spite of that, was not developing properly, has been the despair of the physician. Advice was given as to diet, hygiene, general management, but still the results were far from satisfactory. In recent years there has been some advance in dealing with some of such cases. A small proportion of them are due to disturbance of the internal secretions, and a lot of excellent work has been done in the study of such cases and their treatment with preparations of the appropriate gland extract. Others again have been found to be due to the absence of one or other of the vitamins from the dietary, and along these lines also good work is being done. While yet others have been found to respond to a certain extent to treatment with ultra-violet rays. There has been a definite advance, but the vast majority of cases do not come into

any one of the classes, and so for them orthodox medicine does absolutely nothing beyond the general advice.

Cases of this type may, for simplicity, be grouped under two headings :—

- (1) Those in which the mental development is disturbed.
- (2) Those in which the physical development is faulty.

Under the first heading we place all degrees of mental disturbance. There is the case of the infant who is merely backward. He is slow in learning of walk, though without any physical weakness, and slow in learning to speak. His attention wanders easily, and he does not appear to take notice of things and people as the normal infant does. Yet there does not appear to be anything radically wrong, and the parents are advised not to worry, that he is only a little slow in developing and will get all right. Too often that is merely a pious hope. This is the type of child which not uncommonly in later years is found to have developed into the unemployable, or the criminal, adult. On the other hand, under the action of bar. c., borax, nat. m., or one of the other kindred drugs, in a very short time these children become perfectly normal.

There is the more marked case of the definitely mentally defective. There appears to have been a complete lack somewhere in the brain and the child fails to show any ordinary intelligence. It is a pitiful sight; unable to speak or to understand, the infant remains as helpless as at the day of its birth. The usual advice given is to have the child sent to a mentally defective home, where, with infinite patience, it may be possible to do something in the way of educating the child to be clean, and perhaps to feed and clothe itself. And yet I have seen cases such as these become normal children, who later have been able to attend an ordinary school and take their place with ordinary children, after careful homœopathic treatment.

Another type of disturbance which is extremely common these days is what is known as the nervous child. The child is afraid to be left alone, is afraid of the dark, terrified of traffic, afraid of animals, liable to suffer from sleeplessness and night terrors; he is a misery to himself and a torture to his parents. A wealth of literature exists on the subject of the nervous child, full of

excellent advice as to the general management of such cases, but with directions as to medicinal treatment confined to the use of sedatives. On these lines the acute symptoms can be controlled, but the unstable nervous system remains untouched. Consideration of the environment in which the child is living is important, but consideration of the nervous make-up of the child is vital. Otherwise that child will show signs of nerve strain if subjected to adverse conditions in later life. Homœopathy can take hold of that unstable nervous system. It can control the immediate symptoms with ease, and, what is of infinitely more value, it can so modify and strengthen the whole nervous system that all signs and symptoms of instability will disappear.

On the physical side the problems are very similar. Here we meet with acute conditions, not as separate isolated facts but as indications of some deeper underlying weakness. This is a type of the story that one so commonly hears. The infant appeared healthy at birth. The first sign of any trouble was when it was cutting the first teeth. Then the child had a digestive upset, attended by a little diarrhœa, or a little vomiting, or perhaps a mild convulsion. Shortly after it developed a mild attack of bronchitis, and since that time it has never, for many weeks together, been free from cold, and these colds always have a tendency to settle on its chest. The next step in the history is enlargement of the tonsils and adenoids, perhaps an acute earache followed by a discharge from the ear and more or less marked deafness, and finally, enlargement of the glands of the neck with or without abscess formation. That is the kind of history I have heard, with minor variations, scores of times in the out-patient department. Each one of the episodes has been dealt with as it arose. A course of grey powder has corrected the digestive disturbance and prevented the return of convulsions. An expectorant mixture and the vigorous application of camphorated oil have cured the bronchitis. The enlarged tonsils and adenoids and the discharging ear are about to be dealt with by the surgeon. The enlarged glands are what usually cause the children to be brought to us.

That is one type of history, and there are many others, all differing considerably in their symptoms, but each of them so

constant that one can foretell what their medical history will be; they are certain to develop this, that, or the other acute illness. To the parents the acute illness is the whole story, but to the physician it should be but one item in a connected history.

It is here that homœopathy can do some of its greatest work. It depends, in some degree, on the point in the history at which the child comes under treatment as to how much can be done; but no matter at what point the treatment starts, it is aimed at eradicating the underlying constitutional weakness, and not merely at removing the acute symptoms of the moment, and, what is more, it succeeds and nothing else does.

You will have discovered long ere this that I am no speaker. I have attempted to place before you a few examples of the kind of observations which one makes in the course of practice, and the conclusions to which these observations have led me. If I have made you realize that my belief in the superiority of homœopathy is the result of actual experience, and if I have stimulated the interest of any inquirers, I shall feel that I have not altogether wasted your time.

The British Homœopathic Journal.

However strange it may appear to speak of palliative treatment in connection with homœopathy, yet that treatment is employed under certain circumstances even by those who have practiced homœopathy for years past. A physician must be very unfeeling if he would refuse to palliate the troublesome or dangerous symptoms in cases where they are owing to the presence of an exciting cause, or when the case is hopeless and the curative treatment is of no avail. Every good physician will endeavor to palliate his patient's sufferings until his death, in all cases where a cure is out of the question. This rule of conduct, which is deeply written in the human heart, is not only true in incurable but also in very painful diseases. This maxim prevails alike in the homœopathic as well as the allopathic practice, with this difference, that in the latter practice palliatives are frequently resorted to for the purpose of subduing a single symptom, even if the totality of the symptoms should indicate a totally different remedy, (we merely mention the abuse which is made of opium, the sudden suppression of salutary evacuation, the pellentia and exsiccantia in chronic local affections etc.) HARTMANN'S *Acute Diseases*, 1846.