AN
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION
ON
Neuralgia,

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Neuralgia.

The definition of Neuralgia, as given by Dr. Dunglison, is:

"A generic name for a certain number of diseases, the chief symptom of which is a very acute pain, exacerbating or intermitting, which follows the course of a nervous branch, extends to its ramifications, and seems therefore to be seated in the nerve."

You will see that the term neuralgia, as defined above, does not indicate the nature of the disease, or rather its anatomical character, but is simply a symptom of diseased action.

The nature of the disease is, among physicians, as yet unsettled.
that, but I am disposed to agree with Dr. Wood, that it is purely functional or nervous, and may be extended so as to embrace all cases of pain, not dysmotic, and which cannot be traced directly to vascular congestion, inflammation, or other organic lesions.

Symptoms:—The pain is of a possible degree, and variety of character, tho' generally severe, sometimes it is darting, or lancinating, sometimes acting, burning, and piercing; it generally approaches without any premonition, either beginning moderately, with a sensation of acting, or by darting suddenly through the part, with intensity, the pain
is generally continuous, varying in intensity, but at some times consists of a succession of very violent paroxysms, with comparatively ease in the intervals.

The paroxysms are sometimes attended with flushing and vasomotor turgescence.

The duration of the disease is indefinite. The patient may have only one attack, which may last only for a few hours, or he may have several attacks and the disease afterward disappear, or he may be affected for years or even during his whole life.

Seats of the disease:

It may attack any portion of the body where there are
Nerves distributed, that some portions of the body are more liable to be attacked than others, and these have received distinct designations, as Neuralgia of one side of the head that of Atmirena, Neuralgia of the heel that of Bungo Necto, that of the Stomach Gastralgia.

Causes:— These may be divided into predisposing and exciting causes. The most general predisposing causes are those having a tendency to produce a debilitated state of the constitution. This fact is very evident from the nature of the disease, it being purely nervous, for it is well known to pathologists.
that in an enemic or debilitated state, irritation is peculiarly disposed to seat itself in the nervous afflue.

The exciting causes are very various. It may originate in some other morbid affection either local or general, beyond or contiguous to the seat of the pain, or in some modification of the nerves immediately affected.

One of the most frequent sources of neuralgia may be found in a diseased condition of the spinal column, which may be detected by tenderness at pressure at the point of seat.

Sometimes the disease is pr-
observed by a tumour, situated in the course of a nerve; or by the deposition of bursiform matter, or by the roughness of a bony canal through which a nerve passes.

Rheumatism, and Gout, are also frequent sources of the disease.

There are a great many external causes, such as cold especially when combined with moisture; Wounds &c. Intemperate eating or drinking; The excessive use of tobacco; The sudden removal of cutaneous diseases are all frequent causes of the disease.

Diagnosis:— This division
of the subject I would gladly avoid, on account of its obscurity, there being no pathogemonic symptom and from its self the characteristic features of Neuralgia being a symptom of almost every other disease. And again, the disease is often complicated with other diseases, such as gout, rheumatism &c., and consulting the different Authors but renders the subject more perplexing.

Let us take Dr. Woods' practice, and compare his views of rheumatism, and Neuralgia, and with these views as his guide see if any one could form a diagnosis.

We can divide diseases only
acccorded to their seats, or
tissues they occupy; thus inflamma-
tion of the pleura is called Pleur-
tis, of the stomach, Gastritis.

And Dr. Wood accordingly, seats
Rheumatism, in the muscular, ser-
ous, or fibrous tissues; but so
soon as he speaks of nervous Rheu-
matism, he changes his position
and observes or compounds his sub-
ject. It is plain a disease may
commence in one tissue, and extend
by sympathy of contiguity, or func-
tion, to another organ or tissue;
and thus become complex, but
still if you would avoid confu-
sion, you must not lose sight
of the tissue, or confound a dis-
ease proceeding from the same
cause and affecting one organ or tissue, with a disease of a different organ, the proceeding from the same cause - thus many say pleurisy of the head (I mean the uneducated) - tho' there is no pleura in the head, they mean a disease proceeding from the same cause - Big Oil. Thus compounding two diseases, but if Rheumatism is a disease of one tissue, and Neuralgia a disease of another, are not the terms Nervous rheumatism etc., as improper as pleuritic Gastroitis, and does not such language lead unavoidably to confusion.

The nerves are the seat of Neuralgia primarily and mainly,
that this disease may affect secondary other tissues, thus a Neuralgia of the Posterior Nerve may affect secondarily. The bronchial membrane, producing irritation of, with a discharge from the membrane, or one of the intercostal nerves may be affected, and we may have, Cough, pain on breathing, and Mucus expectoration. Here several tissues are affected - the Nervous - Mucous - and may be the Lymphatic, but shall we call it a Nervous Bronchitis or Pleuritis? Examine along the spine and the course of the nerve and you will find the part tender, and from the fever, flushed face, and
quickened pulse, there may be inflammation, may it may even continue until Bronchitis proper-
ing the Mucous Surface, and the nerves going to it are inflamed. This might perhaps be with-
propriety designated as Sympathetic Bronchitis, yet to call it the nervous would have a tendency
to confuse.

If we say then that Neuralgia consists in the irritation of a nerve, I think we have as clear an
idea of this disease as we have of the term irritation, and the disease only becomes obscure when other tissues become invol-
ed. And it is plain that more or less obscurity may exist
when any other disease becomes complex, and all we can do in such cases, is by close investigation to find out the primary disease.

Treatment: It is not surprising that men confounding the diseases, should confound the treatment, and that those means, which are alone of service in Rheumatism, should be used in Neuralgia, and vice versa, and is not this a fact? Though the same treatment to a certain extent is required in all inflammations, whether of nerves, muscles, or blood-vessels, yet it is not the same in all respects, and that man is not skilful who does not know the peculiarities
of each, and again there may be only irritation or clearance of function, and this as
station for inflammation, thus you may be called to a man with sharp pain, or itch, in
the side. The pulse may be rapid with cough, as, how to treat this case as a pleural might
endanger life, for on examination of the spine, you might at once convince that the
disease is not a pleurisy. The
history of the patient, the press
ure along the nerve aiding you
in the diagnosis, and whether
irritated, or inflamed, the bold
treatment required in pleurisy
would not be required here.
If the disease arise as it most frequently does from a debilitated state of the constitution, or from a Rheumatic or Spotty condition, these several conditions should be corrected and the affection will disappear.

If the disease arise from the presence of a tumour or foreign body, the only remedy is their removal. And cases resulting from the inﬂamed or irritable state of the Spinal Column, are most frequently relieved by the application of a blister over the affected spot.

The Narcothics are generally indispensable in the treatment of this disease, and opium
in some form is generally given, but the treatment is so various that it would be impossible for me to give all the indications.

The local remedies are almost as numerous, but I will only mention a few of the most important, among which the Harcooer brandy first. Laudanum may be employed by...
of this disease. Sometimes
all these remedies fail and
recourse has been made in se-
vere cases, to excision.

E. J. Parker

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