AN INAUGURAL DISSERTATION ON

SUBMITTED TO THE
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AND MEDICAL FACULTY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF NASHVILLE,
FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.

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W. T. BERRY & CO,
BOOKSELLERS AND STATIONERS,
NASHVILLE, TENN.
Hydropsy may be defined to be an accumulation of serum in the cellular tissue or cavities of the body, in the consideration of all diseases the point to which we should pay particular attention is to their pathology.

As the pathology of disease is intimately connected with the treatment, and in fact as the rational mode of treatment is based on the pathology of the disease, it is of high importance that we should be well acquainted with the true pathology of the disease so that we may be able to direct our treatment according to the principles of science and of reason. Otherwise it will be mere empiricism. The first pathological state to which we shall direct our attention is irritation.
It is a well known fact that secretion is greatly increased by irritation until it reaches a certain point when it has advanced beyond this point it decreases. This result is in all probability brought about by an increased flow of arterial blood to the part so irritated, or perhaps it may be owing in some degree to an increased amount of nervous power directed to that particular tissue or from both these causes combined. Secreration occurring in a case of this kind, might very properly be denominated active. But on the other hand we may say irritation and a relaxation of tissue of the part, then secretion would take place in a passive manner.
It is quite probable that dropsy does not occur very often from the effect of irritation, unless it all the same time should be associated with a relaxed state of the system. The most pathological condition which we shall notice is that of venous congestion. This is one of the most frequent pathological conditions of dropsy. It may result under various circumstances. It may result in an abnormal condition, or in a phlegmonous condition of the system. When the congestion takes place in a debilitated state of the system, the dropsy generally commences in the lower extremities, and depends in the first place on the relaxed condition of the blood vessels owing to a want of the necessary stimulating
Qualities of the circulating fluid, the venous blood accumulating still further favors this condition, until at length the blood vessels permit the less watery part of the blood to be forced through, or to pass through by mechanical exudation. The effusion may be in part owing to the downward pressure of the blood, the valves being obliterated, and it is probably owing a great deal more to this than to the force of the blood from behind. We will take up next venous congestion of the portal circulation. There are circumstances at attending this which differ materially from the preceding, and which require particular notice.
Vonoes congestion of the porta circulation is the pathological condition of ascites. It is generally caused by inflammation of the liver or some malignant disease of the liver, obstructing the blood in the radicles of the porta, and causing it to accumulate in the venous radicles supplying the porta. Hence, this condition may occur in a pathological state differing entirely as respects the condition of the system. It may occur in an atonic or in a plexoronic condition of the system. We can very easily account for the effusion, taking place by remembering that duly oxygened blood is necessary in certain limits to give tone to the
The circulatory apparatus and that when ever this is disturbed by any means the vessels become relaxed, in part from the want of this stimulus and in part to the deleterious influence of blood saturated with carbon. In this manner the blood or its more fluid parts are permitted to thrown by the force of the blood from behind and as I think by mechanical exudation owing about as much to the pressure of blood in the veins and other circumstances which favor the arrangements accumulation of secretion in this form of congestion is that the absorption is principally carried on by means of the veins, these becoming eac
Congestive can no longer absorb the effused serum. What absorption does take place is principally carried on by means of the lymphatics. It would be reasonable to suppose that absorption would be diminished if there were no accumulation of blood in the absorbent veins because of their relaxed condition. This relaxed state owing to a deficient supply of arterial blood.

Deficient absorption is mentioned by writers as being one of the pathological conditions of dropsy. It is true that absorption is diminished in dropsy yet the same pathological condition that produces the diminished absorption increases the effusion and dropsy would take place provided absorption should not in the least be diminished.
We have passed over what we conceive to be the pathological conditions in dropsy. We shall consider next the causes on which these conditions depend. The cause of irritation among the causes of irritation may be mentioned cold when in a state of perspiration, the translation of gout or rheumatism, long continued disease as intermittent fever or chronic inflammation of the liver the latter acting as a cause by debilitating the tissues and impoverishing the blood. Among the causes of a severe congestion are impoverished condition of the blood, acting directly by impoverishing the tissues. The obstruction by tumors and disease of the heart and of the liver are among the most frequent causes, after merely mentioning
Some of the causes, I will remark, that we may have almost any one of these causes acting on the system and yet dropsy will not be the result, and is generally associated with more than one of the pathological conditions mentioned.

The prognosis is favorable or unfavorable according to the cause. If it depend on derangement of the function, we may regard it as favorable, while on the other hand if it depend on organic lesion of some important organ as the heart, lung, or liver it is uncertain.

Treatment, in the treatment of disease, we should in the first place endeavor to remove the cause of the disease, for as long
The cause remains it will be impossible to eradicate the disease. In the treatment of dropsy we might reasonably expect the treatment to be as variable as the pathological conditions are on which it depends, and knowing that the system may be placed under quite different circumstances, we would readily come to the conclusion that no notion of treatment is applicable or can be adopted with success.

The first remedy which we shall bring forward in the treatment of dropsy is venesection. Now it may sound almost strange to hear talk of bloodletting in this disease associated as it is generally with an anaemic state of the system. Indeed it is so nearly ever indicated, yet we think there
are certain conditions in which it would be of great benefit as in irritation with active congestion. In a case of this kind it would act beneficially by diminishing the quantity and the force of the blood. In irritation the secretion depends on the stimulating effects of an increased amount of arterial blood being directed to the part by bleeding as in the first place lessen the amount of blood sent to the part as well as in the whole system. and at the same time promote the absorption of the effused fluid which renders the blood less stimulating and by this means lessen the irritation which keeps up the congestion. Another condition in which it might be employed with advantage is
Where we have distension of the blood vessels with impure blood, by bleeding we would decrease the exhalation by relieving the distended vessels, then by giving tonics and diuretics we should expect to relieve the system of the disease.

If the irritable dropsy depends on a debilitated state of the system and a relaxation of the tissues, then we should give diuretics to promote absorption while we at the same give tonics to invigorate the system and improve the condition of the blood. In dropsy produced by the gouty or rheumatic diathesis we might expect advantage in the use of colchicum. From the good effects it is capable of.
of producing in these diseases.
In the treatment of dropsy depending
on congestion of the portal circulation.
Our treatment would differ materially
from that caused by debility.
In a great many cases of this kind,
we will find the system able to
sustain pretty active depuration.
Two indications are to be fulfilled one
to remove the cause the other to effect
the absorption; if the disease depends
on chronic inflammation of the liver.
We would direct our remedies to the
liver while we at the same time
should give other remedies to relieve
the congestion, we would direct
a dose of calomel or blue pill at
night, followed a drastic cath.
cetic in the morning next.
as gasebo, the cream of tartar in combination with gallop and if there should be irritation a dose of powders would be advantageous if not in relieving irritation it would be by directing action to the skin. If the disease results from organic derangement of the liver such as tuberculosis or other malignant forms of disease we could not hope for a cure our treatment could only be palliative. We might go on to state a great many other remedies which are said to have performed cures, but the true pathological condition should ever be our guide, and following the indications we should scarcely err. Respectfully submitted to the faculty.

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