

**SYPHILITIC AFFECTIONS OF THE
NERVOUS SYSTEM, AND A CASE OF
SYMMETRICAL MUSCULAR ATROPHY;
WITH OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE
PATHOLOGY OF THE SPINAL MARROW**

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THOMAS READE

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PREFACE.

A PERIOD of thirty years has passed since I first made a positive diagnosis of what is now designated in comprehensive terms, Syphilitic Affections of the Nervous System.

For more than ten years I continued to diagnose cases of this nature, during which space of time I had reason to believe that my opinions and views were unrecognised or altogether discredited in the profession: at least, I was certain that all written authority was adverse. The repetition of cases, attended with the decided success which followed the administration of specific treatment, forced on me a conviction so complete, that I regarded it to be a duty to the profession to publish the cases which led to my undoubting conviction, as I had reason to believe that those offsprings and evidences of constitutional syphilis were by no means rare, and that the attention of the profession being called to

this point, I considered the question would undergo a just scrutiny by those whose opportunities in metropolitan hospitals would enable them to seek out and select cases bearing a similar syphilitic and pathological history. This ordeal and test of the faithfulness of the narration and description of the morbid evidence imputed to this nosological source having been for many years allowed and noticed in very many medical periodicals as well as monographs, I am thereby induced to collect and re-publish in a single volume the scattered communications which originally appeared in the 'Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medicine and Surgery,' with some cases not before published; an Appendix being added, containing some illustrative notes and references.

It was in the year 1837 that I saw the first case* (No. 9, Second Series) which guided me, and fixed my attention on the discredited phenomena of syphilitic disease affecting the nervous system.

This case (9th, Second Series) had been treated for eleven months for quotidian ague, which had resisted all the usual anti-periodic specifics in Corfu, where the disease had its beginning. The patient left Corfu on sick leave. In London he was again treated without success; also Dublin and Belfast: finally returned to his native place to render up his life among his family, of an inexorable malady.

* See note and reference in the Appendix.

His rapidly failing power caused me to be consulted. On my first visit, I discovered what I then supposed to be a complication of constitutional syphilitic disease. On each internal malleolus I detected a node; also an abscess of the cranium, on the "os frontis," which had been opened in Corfu by one of the military surgeons. The most positive denial of the possibility of a venereal infection restrained me from the employment of specific treatment. When the progress to death became inevitable, the patient related to me an incident in his life sufficiently confirmatory of my diagnosis to induce me to make one more effort to save life. The perusal of the case will show with what marvellous quickness mercury interposed to avert dissolution and bring about his recovery.

In 1845—1847 a succession of cases brought this subject again under my observation, but upon those occasions with such significance and prominence of symptoms, that I deemed it my duty to offer the substance of my observations for publication to the editor of the 'Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medicine and Surgery.'

The editor declined the paper, on the ground that he would only publish original matter, and alleged that I had been anticipated by M. Ricord, of Paris. I requested him to refer me to the publication. He said it was in the room, had his hand

on it lately, tossed over many unbound pamphlets, though ultimately he abandoned his search, but promised to let me know where I could find the information I sought. He failing to fulfil his promise, I wrote to a medical friend in Dublin to wait on him to ascertain the designation of the publication so interesting to me. The interview only produced the information to me, by letter, that the editor had no other authority for his statement than the lectures by M. Ricord published in the 'Lancet,' 1847; which lectures I myself had, and had very carefully read before our communication, or my offer to publish.

On the same day of my interview with the editor, I was for many hours with Mr. Cusack, in his house in Kildare Street. I took the opportunity to ask him if he had known or heard of such a book by M. Ricord, or of any of the medical faculty of Dublin who entertained opinions or convictions similar to my own. He replied, that he believed if I could prove those opinions, I would be *perfectly original*; as far as he knew the mind of the profession, my views were not received; the only person he ever heard express a similar conception was the late Mr. Abraham Colles, but that he never had been able to establish in evidence the ideas he entertained.

In the autumn of 1850, Dr. R. B. Todd was on a tour through part of Ireland, in way of relaxation

and amusement: when in Belfast he came to visit me. In the course of our conversation, I mentioned that if his visit had been on the previous day I would have asked him to see a patient of mine who had been in a very critical state, but chiefly I desired his opinion because the malady was an unrecognised disease. This led to my describing one of those cases of syphilitic disease of the nervous system. For the first time I found a physician perfectly conversant with the disease, and holding opinions on the nature of the disease, also on its treatment, conformable with my own views. He was greatly interested, and remained a long time with me discussing the subject. Dr. Todd's first clinical lecture was published in 1851.

Subsequent to these incidents, it was perfectly accidental that my cases were ever published. The fortuitous meeting with the late Dr. Neligan at dinner in 1851 led to his informing me that he had just been induced to undertake the editorship of the 'Dublin Medical Journal,' and he expressed an earnest wish that provincial medical men could be induced to send contributions, as they could undoubtedly render valuable assistance to the periodical. I mentioned that I had in 1847 offered to his predecessor a paper, which I described to him, that had been refused, as not being original. He expressed a desire to have the paper, which I

at once promised to him, and it appeared in the ensuing quarterly publication.

While I had these remarkable examples of disease under observation, I was also desirous that the patients should submit themselves to the investigation of surgeons holding prominent positions as metropolitan consultants. This I deemed just and advisable for the patient under prolonged disease, as well as to test the authoritative voice of the profession on a subject of deep interest and importance. The result of the investigation and opinions pronounced were not in accordance with the opinion suggested by me; so that I had reason to conclude no one in leading practice supported me in 1847.

I re-publish the separate papers in the original form in which they were offered to the profession in the 'Dublin Quarterly Journal,' especially as I have no reason to change the views I then submitted as the results of my personal experience of the cases related.

A few foot-notes attached to the letterpress, and some additional cases in an Appendix, will complete the object I have in view.