

Having removed the cause, the bacillus, the question arises, what antidote have we as against the ptomaines or toxins?

Concurring in your statement that the scientific completeness of the etiology of tetanus is exceptional, let us hope that THE JOURNAL will continue to discuss the subject with more particular reference to its treatment.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RECLINING POSTURE IN FEVERS UPON THE PRODUCTION OF OTITIS MEDIA.

Read at a meeting of the Milwaukee Medical Society, Dec. 22, 1891.

BY H. V. WÜRDEMANN, M.D.,
OF MILWAUKEE, WIS.

It is generally accepted as a truism that the most frequent mode for propagation of an inflammation from the naso-pharynx to the middle ear is by direct extension along the mucous lining of the Eustachian tube. Any hindrance to drainage of the middle ear and tube occasioned by occlusion of the nose or pharynx is also recognized as a prolific cause of Eustachian salpingitis and otitis media. This is particularly marked in children, as their naso-pharynx is quite small in proportion to that of adults. Hence, the relatively greater number of acute aural affections in young people.

While these are the usual methods, a factor which may be overlooked is sometimes the actual cause, and in other cases an adjuvant of the inflammatory process. The recumbent position in any febrile disease, accompanied by inflammation of the upper air passages, leads to the accumulation of secretion from the nose and mouth in the naso-pharynx, from which it is with difficulty expelled. The influence of gravitation is naturally most marked in the dorsal decubitus, a position usually assumed by very weak patients. The irritation induced by the decomposition of the retained mucus around the mouths of the Eustachian tubes and their mechanical stoppage is an efficient cause of the aural complication. [See also Burnett.¹]

To repeat from a former article:² Even "normal mucus from the nose forms a fertile pabulum for the growth of microorganisms." Secretion remaining in the naso-pharynx soon decomposes, giving rise to suppurative inflammation of the neighboring delicate membrane lining the aural passages. "Wright³ examined the nasal secretion of 10 healthy persons of different ages for bacteria. There were found in six cases, staphylococcus pyogenes albus, aureus and citreus; in three, micrococcus flavus desidiens; in one, bacterium tactis aerogenes; in one, penicillium glaucum; in one, micrococcus cereus flavus; in one, micrococcus tetragenus; and in three, some undetermined species. The numerical preponderance of suppurative cocci agrees with the results of others." Of course decomposed mucus is even more septic.

As it is often advisable that the patient be confined to bed in the course of la grippe or the exanthemata, this cause in the production of the aural affection must necessarily obtain. It is evident, however, that otitis media would not be so common a sequel of such diseases if some attention, in these

cases, were paid to the removal of secretion from the naso-pharynx by a warm spray of Dobell's solution, salt and water, or some such simple means.

805 Grand Avenue.

A SKETCH OF MR. LAWSON TAIT AND HIS WORK.

BY FRED BYRON ROBINSON, B. S., M. D.,

OF CHICAGO, ILL.,

PROFESSOR OF GYNECOLOGY IN CHICAGO POST-GRADUATE MEDICAL SCHOOL.

In the following sketch an attempt will be made to present to the American physician some information of the life and work of Mr. Lawson Tait. The suggestion arose from the oft-repeated inquiry, which I have heard, to know more of the man who has written so well and worked so successfully.

At the time the subject of this sketch appeared on the field of practical surgery the harvest was ripe, and his genius, which was untiring energy, quickly gathered the fruit that had long waited a reaper. The medical profession have gladly welcomed the gathering of his golden sheaves, which have grown into ripened stacks. Mr. Lawson Tait was born in 1845, in Edinburgh, Scotland. He is the only surviving son of Archibald Campbell Tait. His parents died many years ago. Mr. Tait was admitted into the Heriot Hospital school at 7 years of age. He early showed marked mental capacity, and while at this school he won a scholarship which entitled him to be sent to the University of Edinburgh, where he studied the arts and sciences, and finally medicine. He began the study of medicine at 15 years of age, and was graduated at 21 as a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Scotland. During his medical studies he was under the training of a young surgeon of much promise, Alexander McKenzie Edwards, who was the favorite pupil of Sir William Fergusson. But Mr. Tait will be best remembered as the favorite student of Sir James Y. Simpson. Simpson was the greatest gynecologist of his day, and it is not strange that Mr. Tait should imbibe the views and be impressed with the teaching of a great man like Simpson. Simpson was one of the great original thinkers of his age, and also a practical observer, and this logical force of circumstances destined him to be a foremost leader in gynecology. Mr. Tait seems not only to have grasped Simpson's teachings with benefit, but immediately carried the key of progress into new fields. About this time a sad event occurred to the world, as well, no doubt, to the hopes and aspirations of Mr. Tait. It was the sudden death of the famous Simpson. With unfeigned sorrow the medical world beheld this great man fold his cloak of death about him and pass the gate that stands ajar for all. As Mr. Tait's beloved teacher was dead, he decided to leave Edinburgh. He went to reside at Wakefield as house surgeon to a hospital. We will now pause to consider some important matters in 1867, when Mr. Tait was 22 years of age, and beginning his surgical work in the Wakefield hospital. Up to 1860 the condition of abdominal surgery was not very encouraging. The best statistics which I have been able to observe records that ovariectomy was performed some four hundred times from the days of McDowell until 1860. The mortality was at least 45 per cent. Such frightful mortality would appall even a stout heart. Almost half the women died from the operation. From 1860 to 1866 Mr. Tait was a student in a school

¹ Burnett, Chas. H., "Acute inflam. of the Middle Ear." Internat. Clinics, July 1891, p. 345.

² Würdemann, H. V., "Acute Suppur. Middle Ear and Facial Paral." Ophth. Record, Dec. 1891, p. 211.

³ Wright, Bacteriol. World, July 1891, p. 525.

known the world over for its original and progressive men. In short, history hints that McDowell himself received the suggestion of opening the abdomen to remove tumors from the Bells of Edinburgh, where he was listening to medical lectures. From the Bells the views passed on to Lizars, so that the Edinburgh school was in the head and front rank of abdominal work. Abdominal section must have been carefully discussed by the professors of the school from 1860 onward. Mr. Tait states somewhere in his writing that while he was a student their boyish debates often turned on the question, "Is ovariectomy justifiable?" and he notes that the conservative element among the students was so strong that the decision was nearly always against performing the operation. Two points can be gleaned from students' debates. The first is, that they will debate questions which their teachers discuss; the second is, that the students will decide as their teachers have instructed them. So we can reasonably conclude that during Mr. Tait's student days the Edinburgh school held an unfavorable view toward ovariectomy. But whether Mr. Tait resolved to follow the course laid down by his celebrated teachers or not, we find that circumstances at the Wakefield hospital led him into performing ovariectomy. It appears that at this institution Mr. Tait was allowed, by grace of his seniors, exercise of judgment as to the performance of operations. Into the hospital came women with large tumors, which were carrying them swiftly onward and swiftly downward. These women appealed to Mr. Tait for aid. Mr. Tait, seeing that the cases were doomed without surgical interference, operated, I understand, on some eight to ten during three years. The report runs that he saved about two-thirds of the cases. A mortality of only one-third was a vast improvement over other years. In 1870 it appears that Mr. Tait had decided to follow the surgical diseases of women for a life-work. He concluded to remove to Birmingham for a wider field of labor. Just before leaving Wakefield he married a lady of that place. Of her the least we can say is that she is a gentle and sweet woman. Her amiable disposition is her characteristic, and she wins warm friends wherever she goes. She is a pleasant and an entertaining conversationalist. Mrs. and Mr. Tait are a typical example of a happily wedded couple. They are both exceedingly fond and attentive to each other. They are the dearest kind of friends, and spend much time together in driving and traveling. Our ideal of the man is raised when we see him bestowing such devotion on the companion of twenty years.

In the summer of 1870 Mr. Tait went to reside in Birmingham. As a young man of 25, he had shown himself to be possessed of courage. To this fearlessness I would call especial attention, as one of the characteristics of Mr. Tait. He had courage bold enough to follow out his convictions. His courage had already enabled him to save about two-thirds of his cases which were doomed without operation. He saved them by the dreaded abdominal section with its frightful mortality. Mr. Tait is a public-spirited man, and a few months after he arrived in the city he formed the acquaintance of George Dawson, a leading thinker of Birmingham. The acquaintance of this able man no doubt influenced Mr. Tait's life, for they were intimate and warm friends until Dawson's death, some years ago. Though Dawson was a regular officiating Congregational minister of wide

reputation, and a frequent lecturer in different parts of the country, he established a newspaper called the *Morning News*, and Mr. Tait joined the staff. No doubt it would be interesting to read Mr. Tait's articles of twenty years ago, but we can conclude that the articles had originality and merit, or they never would have been accepted by Dawson, who was a keen critic and an exacting judge of journalistic work. We know personally from Mr. Tait's many kind references to the remarkably gifted Dawson that their friendship was a bright spot with happy memories. Such deep and long-continued friendship with gifted minds mold men's character by inscrutable increments. Mr. Tait had been in Birmingham but a short time when he demonstrated his wisdom by joining a movement to found a woman's hospital. With the accomplishment and success of this institution his name is inseparably identified.

We here consider Mr. Tait's position relative to operative gynecology. He has always been an active member of medical societies. He is a master of clear English expression, and when he debates he strikes right at the core of a subject. In fact, his remarks are direct and to the point. His statements appear in a declarative attitude, and each statement contains a challenge of accurateness. His enthusiasm is contagious and his aggressiveness stimulates opponents. He had not long lived in Birmingham before the medical societies began to listen to his new ideas on operative gynecology and journals began to print his views. It is needless to say that the English medical men met these new views with keen opposition, but curiously enough his new ideas were received with more liberality in the States. Three-quarters of a century will yet cover the great epochs of gynecology. The first epoch in this branch of medicine was when McDowell performed ovariectomy. Sir Spencer Wells made another era by his systematic labors in abdominal surgery. A distinct gynecological epoch arose when Sims began to pull back the perineum with his bent spoon. Another great epoch was created in gynecology in 1872, when Battey, Tait and Hegar came forward almost simultaneously and independently with a new operation. Curiously enough, these men lived about as far apart as civilization would allow. The new operation was the removal of the uterine appendages. Battey, of Rome, Ga., in 1865 "conceived the idea of producing an artificial menopause, the remedy of disease," and published his views in 1872. On August 17, 1872, Battey successfully removed the appendages. Mr. Lawson Tait, in February, 1872, removed successfully an ovary with an abscess in it about the size of a pigeon's egg, and he claimed that it was the first record in surgery where a small ovary was removed for pain. On August 1, 1872, he successfully removed both ovaries for persistent hæmorrhage. In the early part of August, 1872, Hegar removed the appendages, but the patient died. The above record shows the remarkable coincidence of widely different men and operators, independently performing the same new operation in the same year and about the same time. As electricity differs in its application in telegraphy, in lighting, and in therapeutics, so the removal of the uterine appendages differed in its application to disease. This same operation by Battey, Tait and Hegar has progressed in three different directions with three different results. Battey's operation limited itself to the neuroses mainly; Tait's operation

mainly involved the removal of the tubes, and Hegar's operation attempted to arrest the growth and hæmorrhage of myoma. The object of the operation was, 1, to remove organs incurably diseased (Tait); 2, to arrest menstruation (Battey); 3, to control uterine hæmorrhage (Hegar). From this time on Mr. Tait began to show his specimens at medical societies and to advocate the removal of diseased appendages. At first he met with little support and much incredulity. A very striking expression of the subject may be illustrated by a debate which occurred in London in 1881, in which Mr. Tait was endeavoring to show, by his numerous specimens obtained from operations, that pyosalpinx was not an uncommon disease. In this congress Sir Spencer Wells arose and said: "I have only seen one such case in my life. I suppose they all go to Birmingham."

In 1873 appeared his work on the pathology and treatment of the diseases of the ovaries. The production gained for him the Hasting gold medal prize. This prize was presented to him at the British Medical Association by Sir William Fergusson in 1873. His work on the ovaries is remarkably original. It shows a large amount of personal investigations. It has gone through four editions.

As the book appeared at a period of radical changes in the methods of treatment of ovarian disease it became very widely read. It no doubt materially modified the course of surgeons in a marked degree, and stimulated progress in pelvic surgery. His large experience with human ovaries enabled him to produce one of the most practical and valuable books on this subject. Mr. Tait made steady progress in gynecology, and in 1877 published his work on diseases of women. A second edition appeared in "Wood's Library" in 1879. This work at once placed him among the front rank of gynecologists. This book was bold, concise and original. Any reader could readily see that its author was progressive and practical. In his preface of that book, twelve years ago, he made a plea that any effort to extend an acquaintance with diseases of women should be received with patience. But I can well remember that the book did not entirely escape ridicule and abuse the first five years of existence. During the next five years it steadily gained in favor. I always looked on this book as being the most unique of its kind. It carried a contagious enthusiasm with it and had a very fertile power of inducing men to think. The work is not at all out of date, and can be still read with pleasure and profit. The book is systematic, and yet lacks dry classification. It is interesting to note that the author has progressively modified some of his opinions through increased experience. The work is vigorously written and is a typical example of a man's own experience and views put in a condensed and attractive form.

(To be Continued.)

The use of cocaine in the urethra is attended with more risk than when applied to any other part of the body. It should be positively forbidden in the recently cut or denuded urethra.—*Ex.*

THE International Dermatological Congress of 1892 will meet in Vienna, on September 5th to 10th. Dr. Prince A. Morrow has been appointed secretary of the Congress for North America.

DOMESTIC CORRESPONDENCE.

PHILADELPHIA LETTER.

The College of Physicians of Philadelphia, held its annual meeting January 6th, for the election of officers. Dr. S. Weir Mitchell was re-elected President, Dr. J. M. DaCosta, Vice-President; Dr. Chas. W. Dulles, Secretary; Dr. Charles Stewart Wurts, Treasurer, and Dr. Frederick P. Henry, Honorary Librarian, for the year 1892.

The Directory for Nurses has maintained its successful course during the past year, paying all expenses and contributing a surplus to the expenses of the College. During the year, special meetings devoted to Ophthalmology were held by Fellows of the College interested in this department, at which valuable papers were read, and patients and specimens were exhibited. At an early date, it is expected that a number of Sections of the College will be formed for the advancement of special departments of medicine, as the Council has this now under consideration. At this meeting, a communication was read by the Secretary, contributed by Dr. Gregorio Fedell, of Rome, Italy, entitled "A Rare Type of Malarial Fever," the author believing that the malarial manifestations observed by him in the reported cases constituted a peculiar type of the affection, which was not curable by quinine alone, and only yielded to a combination of quinine, zedoary root, camphor and ammonia.

Dr. Frederick A. Packard read a report of "Cases of Acromegaly," and presented a patient with enlargement of bones, constant headache, morbid somnolence, and the characteristic appearances of this interesting affection which has been termed "Maladie de Marie."

A specimen was exhibited of acute lepto-meningitis, which, from the general distribution of lymph over the convexity of the hemispheres and the base, and over the cerebellum, and from the clinical history was considered by Dr. Frank Woodbury, who presented the specimen, as infectious in origin and probably caused by influenza. The patient was 25 years of age, single; he was a robust man, whose work was that of stone cutting, which kept him out of doors. Upon returning from his daily work in his usual health, he was seized, Dec. 24th, with a chill, severe headache, backache, vomiting, fever and delirium. He was brought into the Medico-Chirurgical Hospital on the fourth day, and died two days later. There was a temperature of 104° on admission in the afternoon, but, after the administration of two ten grain doses of acetanilid and applying ice to the head, it fell to 100°. In the morning it again rose to 103½° and was 102½° the same evening; during the night he died. There was no eruption upon his body. While under observation he was actively delirious, talking and trying to leave his bed; he was very deaf in both ears, and his left eye was insensitive to light; pupils moderately contracted and sluggish with very little response to the light. Dr. Woodbury believed that the existing epidemic might be fairly assumed to be the cause of the lepto-meningitis, since pneumonia is frequent in influenza, and there is a close relationship between the microbial etiology of pneumonia and meningitis. Moreover, the ordinary causes of meningitis were excluded in this case. He considered it almost identical in appearance with the lesions of cerebro-spinal fever, in autopsies made by him in 1873; and this is of especial interest since the pathological relations of influenza are by no means established, and the possibility of an outbreak of cerebro-spinal fever following influenza has already been suggested. The exceptionally mild and damp weather during December was very favorable to the prevalence of malaria and infectious diseases.

Dr. Turner, Registrar of the City Board of Health, has just