

*Congenital Disease of the Bones.*

53

time. Ulceration soon followed, the bones became affected, and on her admission into the Hospital the disease was quite extensive. When she was about 8 years of age she was confined to the bed for four months, and during that time the right foot became deformed like the left, so that afterwards she was obliged to walk, altogether, with the aid of crutches, upon the side of the foot. Over the outer malleolus and side of this right foot was a large fluctuating tumor, covered by thick integument; about a month before her entrance it had opened, and discharged about four ounces of offensive pus, after which it closed. The left leg was about two inches shorter than the right; the thighs being of equal length.

The height of the patient was five feet. General health, for the last ten years, had been perfectly good. Catamenia appeared at the usual period, and had always been regular. Appetite good, and bowels well.

On the 7th of April, the left leg was amputated. A very small portion of the incision united by the first intention; but the wound was completely cicatrized by the 1st of May. On the 4th of May the tendons about the right foot were divided; splints were afterwards used, and on the 4th of July she left the Hospital; having been able, for the last three weeks, to walk with crutches—the whole weight of her body resting fairly upon the sole of the foot, though there was still some tendency to turn inward.

“Most of the victims of spina bifida,” as Dr. Chandler remarks, “seem to have perished in childhood”; but the cases above reported show under what circumstances life may be sometimes continued; and I would once more call the attention of the profession to the appearances of the tumor when situated over the sacrum, as contrasted with what is so very generally, though not universally, observed when the lumbar or dorsal region is the seat of the malformation.

Yours respectfully, &c.

*Boston, Feb. 6th, 1855.*

J. B. S. JACKSON.

### CONGENITAL DISEASE OF THE BONES.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

I VISITED a family a few days since in this town, in which all the children, three boys, are singularly affected with disease of the bones. The condition of the spine termed rickets, is strongly marked in all three. With this is also present a brittleness of the bones which causes them to fracture with great ease. The eldest, aged 14, was stated by the parents to have fractured his limbs about twenty-five times. The parents, who are poor, have become so used to it, that they now usually adjust the broken limbs themselves. They showed me a fracture of the lower third of the humerus in the oldest which had occurred a few weeks previous. There was a distinct callus perceptible. I had noticed the same on another of the boys, some months since. There had been fracture of the

femur several years since. There was so much muscular contraction, or spasm, that it was not kept in place, and has united at an obtuse, or nearly a right angle. The muscles are subject to violent spasmodic action, which is often so severe as to fracture the bones. The action of the muscles of the calf has bent the tibia and fibula in both limbs of the oldest at right angles, so that when the limbs are extended the feet are parallel with the upper part of the leg. The lower limbs are of course wholly useless, and the muscles much atrophied; still their spasmodic contractions are very severe. The children are bright and intelligent. The parents are both healthy. The mother is rather below the medium height, of a fair complexion and full habit. She manifests no symptom of this diseased condition. She has had two sisters, however, in the same condition, and her father was also diseased in the same way.

The peculiar diathesis seems to have been thus hereditary, and is most fully developed in this generation. It will, however, probably cease here in the extinction of its subjects.

• *Orford, N. H., Feb. 12, 1855.*

J. H. NUTTING, M.D.

#### CHLOROFORM AS A LOCAL AGENT.

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ALTHOUGH we have occasional reports of apparently favorable results from the use of chloroform as a local agent, it seems not to have acquired, to any great extent, the confidence of the profession. Whether these apparent results are mere accidental circumstances, coincident with the use of the remedy, or whether a certain class of cases, cognizable to practical discrimination and diagnostic skill, are amenable to its use, remains for future experience to determine. The following case, from my note-book, is at your service:—

Miss A. E. Robinson, æt. 22, of *nervo-sanguine* temperament, full habit, and good constitution; employed in the family of K. Fleming, Esq., of Summer Hill, Cayuga Co.; on reaching her hand across the table, brought it in contact with a steel carving-fork in the hands of another member of the family. The point of the fork entered the middle of the palm, penetrating, it was thought, about three fourths of an inch, and requiring considerable force to extract it. Some inflammation supervened, with tumefaction and deep pulsating pain, which subsided in few days, under the use of emollient cataplasms; leaving the fingers strongly flexed upon the hand. The accident occurred not far from the 20th of April, 1853. On the 23d of May following, I saw the patient. Her general appearance, appetite, digestion, pulse, &c., were good, and with the exception of a somewhat haggard expression from pain and loss of sleep, there was nothing bespeaking impaired general health. No mark of the wound, or external evidences of inflammation, were discoverable about the hand; yet the fingers were flexed upon the palm so closely and so firmly as to render it almost impossible to