The Surgical Treatment of the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood

Holmes Timothy
THE

SURGICAL TREATMENT

OF

THE DISEASES

OF

INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD.

BY

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PREFACE.

It has long been a favourite project of mine to endeavour to supply an admitted want in our surgical literature by publishing a systematic treatise on the practical surgery of children's diseases. Much material exists in the valuable Lectures of Mr. Athol Johnson and Mr. Bryant; in the interesting record which Mr. Cooper Forster has given of his individual experience; in the Notices sur la Chirurgie des Enfants of M. Guersant; the clinical lectures now in course of preparation by M. Giraldès; and in the great repertory on this branch of medicine, the Journal für Kinderkrankheiten. I have endeavoured to combine in a moderate compass the most useful matter that I could find in these and other sources, with the results of my own nine years' experience at the Children's Hospital, so as to form a practical guide to the general surgery of early life. Some special subjects I have omitted, viz. diseases of the eye and ear, orthopaedics, and diseases of the skin; not because I am in favour of the present fashion of cutting up surgery into little pieces, but because the volume had already exceeded what I intended; and these subjects are all excellently treated in works which are in everybody's hands.
Whatever may be the defects of this book, it will have amply served its purpose if it leads the reader to reflect how much may be done by well-timed surgical interference to save life and limb in the affections of childhood—how far, in fact, that "conservative surgery" may be carried which has been introduced into modern practice mainly by the exertions of Sir W. Fergusson.

It would be ungrateful of me not to acknowledge how much I am indebted to my colleagues at the Hospital for Sick Children—particularly Mr. T. Smith—for much valuable assistance, and to the Managing Committee for indulgence extended to me of late when I have been prevented from rendering much active service to the Hospital. Circumstances compel me to sever my connexion as Surgeon with that admirable Institution; but I was unwilling to resign my office until I had given this proof to my colleagues that I had at any rate attempted to use the opportunities so liberally afforded to me.

Most of the woodcuts for this volume were prepared by my friend Mr. Bishopp, at present one of the house-surgeons to St. George's Hospital; and I have to thank him very sincerely for the care which he has bestowed upon them.

31Charges Street, May 1868.
PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The second edition of this book has been so rapidly called for, that I have not been able to make those changes in its main features which advancing experience always introduces into practical surgical works. The bulk of the succeeding chapters, therefore, will be found to be in substance the same as those of the first edition. I have, however, endeavoured to avail myself of some of the suggestions of my critics for the improvement of this book as a practical guide to children’s surgery. Thus, having found that the omission of orthopedic surgery is considered in many quarters to diminish its value, and learning from the publishers that the necessary increase in size will not be objectionable, I have added a chapter, in which I have tried to summarise in the smallest possible compass the main points connected with this wide subject. In deference also to a French critic I have added a few pages on thoracentesis.

But a more grave objection to the scheme of this book has been started by a very friendly and apparently a very competent reviewer in the Edinburgh Medical Journal for November 1868. This gentleman says that the work wants coherence, inasmuch as it does not contain any chapter bringing out broadly and clearly in what respects the ailments of children differ from those of adults. I had hoped that these differences had been so far brought out in detail in the body of the work as to have rendered any separate enumeration of them unnecessary; but I willingly defer to my critic’s judgment in this particular, and will proceed here to show why, in
my opinion, separate treatises on the surgical diseases of childhood are desirable, and separate institutions for their treatment are necessary; and will also enumerate in detail the main particulars in which the surgery of childhood differs from that of after life.

The surgical affections of early life differ from those of mature years partly in kind, but chiefly only in degree. This is exactly what is found in the practice of the physician. There are a few, but only a very few, of the internal diseases of infancy which are peculiar to that period of life: the great majority are found at all ages, though they are more or less modified in their symptoms and course by the mobile constitution and the rapid action which distinguish early years. Just so in surgery. The differences between the surgical diseases of children and those of adults are either differences in kind—namely, that some such affections only occur in early life, or differences in degree—namely, that the course of some affections is specifically different in childhood from what we see in mature life, and also that the course (and therefore the prognosis) of those affections which do not display any specific difference is yet more or less modified by the constitutional peculiarities of childhood.

The surgical affections which occur only in early life are, all the malformations, the separations of the epiphyses, croup, rickets, congenital syphilis, enuresis, cancrum oris, and noma, with a good number of congenital affections, such as hydrocele in various forms, innocent tumour, and some others. Many other affections also practically belong to this class, though it cannot in strictness of language be asserted that they only occur in childhood. Such are enlarged tonsils, polypus of the rectum, morbus coxarius, foreign bodies in the ear and nose. If the reader will think a little for himself on this matter, and will be at the pains of examining the contents of the ensuing chapters, I have little doubt that he will agree with me that there are quite as many affec-