

## **Case of purpura haemorrhagica / by Ebenezer Gairdner.**

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*W. The Turnbull J. Y. M. Farlane*

CASE  
OF  
PURPURA HÆMORRHAGICA.

By EBENEZER GAIRDNER, M. D.

Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and one of  
the Physicians to the Royal Dispensary.

*read 30 July 1823 at the Med. Chir. Society Edin:  
see their Trans:*

**J**AMES STODDART, æt. 6., the child of parents in comfortable circumstances, residing in a confined part of the town, is of a weak and strumous constitution, though quick and lively. The other children are healthy and robust.

The parents reported, that he had been lately much confined to school, which might account for a swelling of the glands of the neck, and a slight inflammatory affection of the eyes.

On the 24th, and two succeeding days, of April last, he was observed to be particularly unwell, being dull, with an inclination to sit over the fire, and having thirst, with flushed face. On Sunday morning, the 27th, spots, like flea-bites, appeared over a great part of his skin, and soon increased considerably; some were small and red, others, which were the largest, were purple. On Monday, blood



oozed from the mouth, with occasional bloody sputa. On Tuesday morning the urine became of a reddish colour, and turbid; notwithstanding, he was walking about occasionally, and unwilling to be in bed. On the forenoon of this day he accompanied his father, and walked a distance of at least a mile and a half for medical aid.

It was on Thursday afternoon, the 1st May, that I first saw the patient. The appearance, and other symptoms, as above described by the parents, very distinctly marked the *Purpura hæmorrhagica* of Willan. The petechiæ, with vibices and ecchymoses, were numerous over the whole body, particularly crowded on the upper part of the back, breast, and anterior part of both thighs; some of the latter, about the size of a sixpence, of irregular shapes, appearing in colour of as deep a shade as claret; some of them felt somewhat rough, but not at all elevated. By repeated and careful examination, through a glass of considerable power, the texture of the cuticle appeared to be quite entire. The conjunctiva of the right eye was completely ecchymosed, with little or no œdema or lippituda; neither was there diminution of sight nor pain: the tongue was rather dry, and covered with several petechiæ; there was thirst; the gums were redder than usual, very tender, and blood oozed from them, but they were neither soft nor swelled; his breath was extremely fetid; hematemeses was reported to be occasionally present; the Schneiderean membrane was streaked with blood, and occasionally bled. There was a ful-



ness, with pain on pressure in both hypochondria, particularly in the left; there was also obscure pain in the abdomen, which was rather tumid; bowels costive; urine free, and often passed during sleep, it was of a dark red colour and turbid; pulse quick and sharp; heat of skin not much increased; he seemed but little oppressed, being attentive and ready in answering the questions put to him, and expressing curiosity to know what the marks on his skin were.

I ordered the immediate exhibition of a saline cathartic, and fifteen drops of the diluted sulphuric acid, to be taken thrice a-day; also the tepid bath of about 80° Fahr. evening and morning.

May 2d.—Had taken the medicine, and used the bath; some sleep was obtained, but he had a bad night; there was considerable oppression and quickness of breathing; the hæmorrhagic symptoms had increased, with more petechiæ and vibices; pulse 110 and wiry, skin hot and dry.

I immediately bled him; he was sitting on his father's lap during the operation, which he stood well and with courage, until the blood had freely flowed to the extent of about  $\bar{3}x.$ , when he became suddenly sickly and vomited; no blood in the egesta, though he had spit clots of it frequently during the night, and immediately afterwards he passed a copious stool, both formed and loose, of a motley appearance. It was almost impossible to stop, by the most careful means, the discharge of blood from the wound, and, notwithstanding the utmost attention, quantities were



lost, from time to time afterwards, which could not be estimated. Thus, on my return at four o'clock P. M. I found there had been some discharge of blood from the arm. Notwithstanding the loss of blood, the pulse was now 124 and wiry; skin hot. In the evening he was drowsy, and slept quietly from half past five till nine o'clock.

The tepid bath was ordered to be continued, also the sulphuric acid drops; and as a cathartic, for the next morning, powders consisting of calomel and jalap, 3 grains each; to be repeated every three hours until a full effect was produced.

On the 3d, I found blood still oozing from the arm, the wound shewing no disposition to close; several of the vibices were considerably enlarged. There was less oppression, and the breathing easier; the ecchymosis of the eye diminished; the pulse, though quick and sharp, less so than yesterday afternoon; tongue cleaner and more moist; on its surface dimples were felt by the finger, where the petechiæ appeared; little thirst; urinary and alvine discharges nearly as before. The acid drops and the powders, with the tepid bath, were continued.

On the 4th, the pulse was more firm, and 124. There was pain under the os frontis; ecchymosis of the eye greater; and in both hypochondria the pain was increased, with very considerable tension. I again determined on another bleeding, and loosened the bandage from the arm. The part under the compress had become ecchymosed, without swelling. The wound was still open; at first the blood oozed out, and soon flowed, but not very freely, as the pa-



tient became faint at the dread of my again using the lancet, so that only two or three ounces were obtained. However, on my return in the evening, I found that there had been some drainage of blood. He was now in a quiet and sound sleep; pulse, as in the morning, 124; skin not very hot, rather soft; he had been calling for food in the course of the day.

5th.—During the night, and while asleep, he had passed a good deal of urine; also since he awoke. There was now a remarkable change in the appearance of this secretion, it having become pale and limpid. Pulse 102, and moderate; heat moderate; tongue clean and moist; gums better, but still tender, and during the night there had been oozing of blood from them. He had taken a little light nourishment with some relish. Bowels opened by the powders, but this discharge was also in its turn considerably changed in appearance, being very black, and excessively offensive. There was besides some increase of pain, with tension, in the abdomen, and in both hypochondria, but still most in the left. Fomentations, and castor-oil in small doses, were ordered to be immediately administered. This pain increased towards the afternoon, and he moaned very much; while there were several copious stools of the same grumous character as in the morning. At 4 o'clock I found him much distressed, as if nature were inadequate for the further effort that seemed necessary to overcome the disease. A mixture of port wine and water, a pound of each, with an ounce of cinchona infused into it, was frequently



exhibited in small doses ; while the discharge from the bowels was encouraged by the due use of castor-oil.—8 o'clock, P. M. He had passed more black fæces ; but the pain was less, and he was now asleep. Continue the bark infusion, and the acid drops.

6th.—10 A. M. Had a good night ; little or none of the bark infusion had been taken since last night. A laxative powder was given this morning, as he refused the oil ; bowels continued to discharge the same kind of black fæces, with less pain. Tongue pretty natural and moist. He had taken some breakfast. Gums also better, and no oozing nor spitting of blood. Pulse 98, and moderate. Skin of natural temperature ; some of the petechiæ and vibices appeared as if they were somewhat faded in colour, while others were brownish. Eye much better. Continued the acid drops, and the castor-oil as the bowels might require it ; also the bark infusion.—9 o'clock P. M. Much black fæces continued to be discharged with little pain ; there was now, however, an accession of heat, with a quickening of the pulse, so that the bark infusion was intermitted\* ; the acid drops and tepid baths continued, and a laxative powder ordered to be given early next morning, which had the desired effect.

On the 7th, symptoms favourable. Fæces, though still black, less fœtid.

On the 8th the fæces became of a natural appearance ; the petechiæ began to fade, the cuticle re-

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\* Upon the whole, not above one-half of the quantity of the mixture (say  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of wine, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the bark) had been taken, as he disliked it very much.



maintaining quite entire. Pulse 96, not weak. Appetite improving, greater than usual.

10th.—In a state of convalescence, going about the house. The marks of the skin very pale; and the only other symptom remaining was that of the breath being very foetid, which went off a few days afterwards, by the due use of cathartics.

On the 14th he was out airing, and two days afterwards was running about, and remarked by the parents to be apparently in better health than he had been before the accession of the present complaint.

I intended to have had both the blood and the urine analysed; but it is to be regretted that the blood drawn on the 2d May, the only opportunity which was afforded of obtaining it in any quantity, was not preserved. I may state, however, that what was first discharged by the lancet, and received into cups, seemed, four hours after it was drawn, to coagulate very slowly all in one mass. On the following day, it resembled a tremulous jelly, the top of which was of a greenish buff colour, interspersed with brownish spots, like tadpoles. What was afterwards discharged, had, as it came from the arm, more the appearance and consistence of turbid lymph, or fluid in which some reddish colouring matter was in suspension; and the cloths taken from the arm did not present the usual stain of blood, but something like those of dirty water, interspersed with large stains of a reddish-brown colour.



Notwithstanding what has been remarked of the appearance and consistence of the blood, in the cases of *Purpura hæmorrhagica*, that have of late years been published, as to its *tenuity*, the *buffy coat*, and the alleged reduced quantity of the *fibrine*, I do not find that due notice has been taken of a peculiarity, which appears also to be pretty general, namely, that the serum by rest undergoes a slow but spontaneous coagulation. Indeed, the change which the blood seems to suffer, appears to me such as to render it desirable to obtain an analysis of this fluid while the disease is at its height; how important soever it may be to note and investigate, at the same time, the state of the extreme vessels, which seem also to be affected.

Specimens of the urine that was passed on the 2d May, were sent to my friend Mr Murray, who, in the most obliging manner, had offered to undertake the analysis, and whose able report I have the satisfaction to subjoin.

*Mr MURRAY'S Analysis of the Urine.*

No. I., voided on 2d May, at half-past 2 o'clock P. M., was of a brown colour, without smell. On standing, it deposited a precipitate of a darker colour, while the superior part of the fluid was of a dirty pale yellow colour, and turbid. When the urine was shaken, it resumed the original brown appearance; and a portion of it that was set aside, after eighteen hours standing, was still without smell.



- Exper. 1. Litmus paper was stained slightly red.
2. A dense white coagulum was produced by a heat of  $180^{\circ}$ .
  3. Diluted nitric acid and alcohol produced a similar coagulum.
  4. Corrosive muriate of mercury caused an abundant white precipitate.
  5. Lime-water produced a very slight precipitate.
  6. Potash did not cause any precipitate.
  7. One fluid drachm contained  $2\frac{1}{2}$  grains of solid matter; the urine contained  $\frac{1}{24}$ th part of solid contents.
  8. A slight precipitate was produced in the clear liquid by the corrosive muriate and infusion of gall.
  9. The clear liquid contained a considerable portion of a colouring matter, and but a small quantity of phosphoric salts, with no urea.

Nos. II. and III., voided at 5 and half-past 5 o'clock P. M. of 2d May, differed principally from No. I. in containing more free acid and less albuminous matter, the urine containing only  $\frac{1}{27}$ th part of solid contents.

In the 8th experiment, the precipitate was rather more copious, indicating the presence of gelatine and mucus.

In the 9th experiment also, the appearances were rather more distinct.

Dr Combe has shewn, in his case of Purpura \*, that there was an excess of albumen, with a defi-

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\* Edin. Med. Journ. No. 66,



ciency of urea, similar somewhat, in this respect, to the present case.

The parents, though in the inferior rank of life, were acute and intelligent, and fully aware of the singularity, as well as danger, of the disease. At my first visit, being the second time I saw the patient, when I proposed to draw blood, they expressed great surprise, and no small degree of reluctance, at this operation, under such circumstances. Were this merely confined to the vulgar, and those out of the profession, we would not be deterred; but seeing that among medical men the prevailing ideas respecting the nature of Purpura, and sanctioned, too, by the first authorities, have led to the same reluctance in practice, it requires no inconsiderable degree of firmness and address to pursue those different measures of depletion, which have been adopted by a few individuals with better success. I here take the liberty to repeat a remark, already somewhat alluded to by some of these individuals, that this species of Purpura seems to be different from that which occasionally attends Scorbutus, which evidently seems to flow from dissolution and putridity, and requiring a very opposite mode of treatment; at the same time, I am inclined to humbly join some of those writers in thinking, at present, that there are two kinds of the hæmorrhagica, or rather, perhaps, the same disease in different states of the human body, requiring a modified and even a contrary line of practice. But as the practice, in general, may be said to be somewhat empirical, see-



ing that the pathology of the disease is obscure, it behoves us to note the symptoms and phenomena, and collect a mass of facts to enable us to proceed upon more enlightened principles. We are thus indebted to Dr Blackall, to Dr Parry, and to Dr Armstrong, for more correct views of some diseases, and none more, perhaps, than those of dropsy and hæmorrhage.

Modern pathologists, discovering the absurdities and errors of their predecessors, the *humoralists*, in rejecting these, and confining their views to the solids only of the human body, have been found in these latter times to have gone too far, and not to have duly availed themselves of the aids which modern chemistry affords. And, indeed, considering the assistance that this astonishingly progressive branch of science has of late afforded us in icterus, calculi, &c., may we not venture to anticipate, that the pathology of the animal fluids, founded upon facts and experience, will at length be discovered?



