

INFLAMMATIONS.

Every part of the body is liable to inflammation, and there are very few diseases in which there is not more or less inflammation in some part of the body. Hence, a knowledge of the nature of inflammation will serve as a key to the comprehension of the nature of a very large number of diseases.

In very many diseases, inflammation of some part of the system is the immediate cause of the disease, consequently, in treating any disease in which inflammation is one of the conditions, we should seek to reduce the inflammation.

Symptoms.— Inflammation is a disease which is characterized by pain, swelling, heat, and redness. Inflammation in different situations has points of difference relating to the structure affected, and it presents diverse modifications dependent on other circumstances than its seat. Nevertheless, there are features common to acute inflammation wherever seated, and under all circumstances, sufficient to enable us to identify the disease.

A part may be swollen by an accumulation of water or of air therein, as in dropsy and emphysema—wind dropsy— yet there may be neither pain, heat, nor

redness. We must not confound these conditions with inflammation. Both may exist without there being any inflammation in the part.

Neither must we confound inflammation with congestion. Although the last always precedes inflammation, it may exist independent of it. Congestion is simply the swelling of a part, caused by an accumulation of blood; and although pain may exist, there is neither heat nor redness.

Whenever the circulation is disturbed from any cause, there must of necessity be, relatively, more blood in some parts of the body than in others. Some organs become congested with blood which is not passed on readily because of the relaxed condition of the capillary vessels.

Whenever inflammation terminates by simple subsidence, it is said to terminate by resolution. In such a case, the congestion increases until some portion of the blood stagnates in some of the capillary vessels toward the center of the affected part. In a short time, preternatural heat is occasioned by the activity of the tissues to move the blood onward, and the part is then said to be inflamed. If the heat is not very great, nor continued for any considerable time, there will be no leakage of the blood nor of any of its constituent parts, nor any change in it. The inflammation begins to recede, the stagnant but still fluid blood is again set in

motion, the rapidity of the circulation in the surrounding vessels diminishes, and the part returns in all respects to its former condition. This may be properly called the spontaneous cure of inflammation, and to this event there seems to be always a natural tendency, which may be promoted by proper treatment.

Whenever the heat of inflammation is great or is long continued, other events than resolution will be liable to occur. The first we notice is the pouring out of the watery portion of the blood into the loose tissues. Sometimes some of the small vessels give way and hemorrhage into the part becomes an event of inflammation. It is supposed that this occurs in a greater or less degree in most cases of inflammation.

A third event of inflammation is the pouring out of the fibrine or coagulable lymph (that portion of the blood from which the tissues are built) into the loose tissues or upon the inflamed surface. When this lymph is poured out in certain locations, the parts become thereby adhered. In some cases, organs have been united firmly to other organs or to the walls of the cavity in which they are contained. If the lymph is poured out of the vessels among the tissues, it glues them together, and the organ becomes hard, and is said to be indurated.

A fourth event is the formation of pus, and is called suppuration. In this case, the lymph undergoes a change, occasioned by the excessive heat of the part or by a less degree of heat long applied. There are two kinds of pus; the first of which is called healthy, because it has not undergone decomposition. It consists of yellow globules diffused through a watery fluid, and is an opaque, smooth fluid of the consistence of cream, and has little or no smell. The second kind of pus is called ichorous. It is a thin, watery, acrid pus, containing decomposed matter.

A fifth event of inflammation is ulceration. This occurs when in the process of suppuration. Some of the tissues become decomposed, and an open sore is produced.

A sixth event of inflammation is gangrene, or the death of the part.