

in-patient of the London Hospital, worked for several years in Smith's distillery, and has been in the habit of drinking spirit largely. He was quite well previously to June, 1841, when he was attacked with symptoms of acute inflammation of the liver, followed by anasarca. This continued for a short time, when symptoms of granular degeneration of the kidney supervened; and on examination of the urine, it was found albuminous, and of specific gravity, 1018. Has been troubled with palpitation of the heart, and occasional attacks of dyspnoea. Countenance pale and waxy, pulse 96, small and weak, respiration difficult, and cough with bronchitic sputa.

On a local examination, the sounds of bronchitis were heard all over the lungs. The percussion of the præcordial region about natural; the impulse of the heart not perceptible; the sounds normal, without any abnormal bruits.

These symptoms remained with but little alteration, except those produced by granular kidney, which became worse, and he died comatose, about two weeks afterwards.

Post Mortem.—Granular degeneration of the liver and kidneys. The heart smaller than usual; the cavity of the left ventricle about half the normal size, and its parietes somewhat thickened; the other cavities healthy.

Remarks.—The local symptoms during life corresponded, to a certain extent, with those mentioned as characteristic of this affection—viz., "dullness on percussing the præcordial region rather lessened, and the impulse and sounds of the heart diminished, and the pulse small and rather tense." (Hope.) May we, then, suppose it existed in this case during life? In the first place, if it had occurred after death, the cavity of the ventricle could have been dilated to its proper size. This, I regret to say, was not tried; in the second, they usually happen in persons dying a sudden death while in the full vigour of life, whereas this man had exhausted the irritability of his muscular system by the long continued abuse of stimulants; his strength had been reduced by an illness of long duration, and his death had not been sudden, or from violence, but from long continued disease.

The question whether hypertrophy of the heart causes granular degeneration of the kidney, or *vice versa*, has been much discussed; but it is most probable that the latter hypothesis is correct, as most who have examined the question give evidence in its favour, and in above thirty cases of cardiac disease, unaccompanied by symptoms of granular degeneration, which were examined by me, not one had albuminous urine, although several had been diseased above ten years, and the cases embraced almost all the varieties of heart disease.

POISONING BY ARSENIC—IRON ADMINISTERED—RECOVERY.

By SAMUEL ARGENT, Esq., Surgeon.

I was called to J. P.—, the daughter of a little tradesman of this town, about five o'clock A.M., on the 30th August, and found her violently vomited and purged; the evacuations consisting of a watery fluid, intermixed with lumps of green mucus. She had pain in the stomach, heat in the mouth and throat, with thirst. I was informed she had been in this state all night. As she had been for some time past in a low and melancholy way from some disappointment that she had met with, it was at once suspected that she had taken a corrosive poison, which she stoutly denied; till, after a diligent search, a paper was found, with "Arsenic—poison," written upon it, when she confessed having taken half an ounce of arsenic the preceding evening. I then lost no time in washing the stomach out with whiting and water, by means of the stomach pump, it being at hand, and afterwards gave her two drachms of sub-carbonate of iron, (having none of the hydrated peroxide by me,) which was repeated at short intervals; after which she was desired to take three table-spoonfuls of the following mixture frequently:—sulphate of iron, one drachm; solution of potash, half a drachm; water, twelve ounces. In a short time the sickness gradually subsided, though she continued to vomit occasionally that day and the next. She had leeches applied to the epigastric region, which bled copiously, and afterwards mustard cataplasms, and had mucilaginous medicines. On the third day the sickness had left her, she took some food, and appeared quite convalescent and out of danger. It appears that she had taken the arsenic a short time after eating her supper—a very small portion of bread and cheese, (her appetite had been bad for some time,) and a quarter of a pint of beer. Could the recovery be attributed to the iron acting as an antidote, or from the mucous coat of the stomach having been protected by the scanty supper which she had just before eaten? I inquired of the druggist of whom she bought the drug, when he had sold it to her, and he said a few days before.

Hinckley, Sept. 3rd, 1844.

POISONING BY OXALIC ACID.

By H. LETHEBY, M.D., Lecturer on Chemistry at the London Hospital School.

AN unmarried female, named Rebecca —, aged twenty-two, of previously good health, had on Saturday, September 28th, a quarrel with her lover respecting another of his mistresses, and in a fit of jealousy, after he had left her, she must have taken oxalic acid, and destroyed herself, for she was found dead in her room on the following morning. My friend Mr. Garrett was sent for, who made a post-mortem examination of the body, removing the stomach and its contents, although he had great difficulty in so doing, from the corroded and softened state of that organ. These he brought to me to examine. The stomach was very much blanched, excepting in two or three places, where there were black spots, as if blood had been effused and acted upon by the poison; here and there a bloodvessel might be seen ramifying with its contents similarly blackened. The tissue of the stomach was so softened and disorganized, that it could scarcely be handled without tearing; indeed, at the cardiac end it was reduced to a soft, pulpy, or gelatinous consistence, and had numerous perforations in consequence. The contents, which had been saved in a glass, amounted to about six ounces in quantity; they had a very dark colour, like porter, and contained very little solid matter. They were strongly acid, and on being tested, were found to contain about three drachms of oxalic acid.

Remarks.—It has been doubted by some authorities whether oxalic acid has any corrosive action on the stomach. Dr. Christison, I think, only mentions one case in which he found the stomach perforated after its exhibition, and Mr. Taylor remarks, that in his experiments on animals, and from some few observations on the human subject, he has found nothing to bear out the view, that perforation is a common effect of the action of this poison. This case, however, is sufficient to shew that softening and perforation may take place, and, in a medico-legal inquiry, it is proper and important to bear the fact in mind.

12, Tredegar-square, Oct. 7, 1844.

THE LANCET.

LONDON: SATURDAY, OCT. 19, 1844.

AMONGST the civilized portions of mankind, the science of medicine has been increasing in importance during several centuries. The early professors of the healing art were deified, and that feeling of devotion which was displayed towards Machaon and Podalerius, at a period when the powers of medicine were in their infancy, has, as might have been expected, been exhibited with equal strength in modern times,—not by uninformed persons,—not by the creatures of blind prejudices and superstitions, but by the mightiest and most highly-gifted of our philosophers and statesmen. Such a result might have been safely predicated by practical and intelligent minds. The applications of the science of medicine, whenever and wherever they are brought into operation, are always directed against causes which interfere with the happiness of the human race. The mitigation of human suffering is the invariable object of the professors of the healing art; and in the endeavour to remove, or to diminish, the influence of disease, medical practitioners are brought into direct contact with all the manifold elements which lead to the destruction of human life. They who believe that a knowledge of the science of medicine is to be acquired by a mere superficial acquaintance with the structure of the human body, a casual observation of the treatment of maladies, or an investigation into the qualities of those therapeutic agents with which vulgar minds are admitted to have some acquaintance, know little, in reality, of the scientific character of the profession of medicine. Equally insignificant is their knowledge of the power which it can be made to display in lessening the amount of human suffering; and totally devoid are they of all acquaintance with the benign influence which medical practitioners can exercise upon the social condition of every extensive community. The study of medicine leads not only to an inquiry into the nature and peculiarities of disease,