TEMPERATURE OF THE HUMAN BODY AFTER DEATH.

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ON a recent trial for murder, a medical witness gave very positive evidence as to the number of hours that had elapsed since death, grounding his opinion on the fact that the body still felt warm to the hand placed on the abdomen. If I remember well, this gentleman "explained" the high temperature of the abdomen by stating that the woman was pregnant. I think it was a very general impression in the profession that no facts exist on which so confident an opinion could be grounded. Be this, however, as it may, I place the following on record as a contribution to our knowledge on this not unimportant point:—

Private John C—, 22nd Regiment, aged twenty four. He was invalided home from Malta suffering from purpura, which followed an attack of continued fever, probably typhoid, as it was said to have been "complicated with diarrhoea." This young man had a syphilitic history, and his habits were extremely intemperate. He was admitted into the Medical Division of Fort Pitt Hospital on the 19th of October, 1862. He was then much emaciated and very weak, with slight but rather frequent cough without expectoration; the lower extremities and abdomen were covered with purpuric patches; the liver was enlarged, the abdomen tympanitic, with enlargement of superficial abdominal veins, and there was serous effusion into the abdominal cavity.

This man had repeated attacks of epistaxis, requiring the use of the plug in the posterior nares on two occasions, and repeatedly passed blood by stool. Nevertheless, after a time, under careful management, his condition improved, he gained flesh, the bloody discharges ceased, and his general health advanced. Unfortunately, he was seized with double pleurisy, with enormous effusion into the right side, which terminated fatally on the 27th of December, at six A.M. At half-past twelve P.M., Staff Assistant-Surgeon Woods and myself took the temperature of his body, which lay on a grating on the floor of an extremely cold deadhouse, where the body was covered with a sheet, and had remained for six hours and a half after death. The instrument used was a delicate thermometer, made by Negretti and Zambra, for taking the temperature in disease. At the time of the experiment it stood at 52°. Placed in the axilla, it rose to 66°; in the mouth, to 68°. On the chest and abdomen it stood at 65°.

Army Medical School, Fort Pitt, Dec. 1862.

ON A CASE OF POISONING BY A GRAIN OF ACETATE OF MORPHIA IN A CHILD.

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THE following case of recovery in so young a child from the effects of a grain of acetate of morphia taken in a soluble state, and retained undisturbed in the system for two hours and a half, is, perhaps, worthy of record:—

S. L—, aged two years and three months, at nine o'clock on the morning of the 13th of November last, obtained possession of a phial, containing a grain of acetate of morphia in solution in an ounce of oxymel of squills, (a medicine of which her mother was taking a teaspoonful at bedtime,) and swallowed the whole of its contents.

At half-past eleven, when I first saw the child, no vomiting had occurred, although, in addition to the oxymel of squills taken with the poison, she had had, in teaspoonful doses, half an ounce of ipecacuanha wine sent by a chemist, to whom application had been made. I found the child with cold skin, pale face, blue lips, slow weak pulse, and pupils contracted to a point; totally unable to stand, and with difficulty aroused to consciousness enough to express, in childish gestures, its intense desire to be left alone to sleep. Finding that the child still

attempted to swallow when a moistened spoon was rubbed against its lips, I administered two grains of sulphate of zinc in some coffee, more with the hope of rousing the child with the effort of vomiting than with the intention of emptying the stomach of the poison, which I believe had been by this time absorbed into the system. In a few minutes the dose was repeated, and on irritating the fauces with the finger, free vomiting was induced. The emetic acted about six times, strong coffee being freely given during each interval.

At half-past twelve the emetic effect of the zinc had ceased, and the child's state had decidedly improved. She swallowed readily, and could stand for a few seconds unaided, though she was with difficulty kept awake by friends and neighbours, who relieved each other every few minutes in leading her about in the open air, and giving her as much strong coffee as she could be got to swallow.

At half-past two the child was brought to my house. She was icy cold, with an almost imperceptible pulse. She soon rallied, however, under the influence of a warm room and a teaspoonful or so of hot wine and water, when a great improvement was manifest. The pupils were less contracted, though still immovable. She was less drowsy, and could walk a few steps with a tottering gait. She was ordered to be kept thoroughly awake, and to continue taking coffee.

At half-past eight the effects of the poison were wearing off. The pupils were less contracted, and the irides answered slowly to the stimulus of a lighted candle. She could walk unaided, and had just passed urine for the first time since taking the poison. The stupor had given place to extreme restlessness and irritability of manner, and her teeth were chattering with cold. She took some hot egg and milk, with a little wine, and at nine o'clock (twelve hours after taking the poison) she was allowed to sleep, Mr. Bubb (in my absence) undertaking to see her in an hour's time, and again during the night. Under Mr. Bubb's directions she was allowed to sleep alternate half hours during the night.

At half-past nine, on the 14th, I found her free from any trace of opium poisoning, but in an extreme state of restlessness, bordering on delirium tremens. I got her undressed and placed warmly in bed, (she had been in her clothes in her mother's arms during the night,) and ordered her small doses of chloric ether and ammonia every few hours. After the first dose she fell soundly asleep, and slept all through the day and following night, only being awakened to take her food and medicine; and on the morning of the 15th she woke in her usual health, the bowels acting of their own accord for the first time since taking the poison.

Cheltenham, Dec. 1862.

A Mirror OF THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY IN THE HOSPITALS OF LONDON.

Nulla est alia pro certo noscendi via, nisi quam plurimas et morborum et dissectionum historias, tam aliorum proprias, collectas habere et inter se comparare.—MORGAGNI, *De Sed. et Caus. Morb.*, lib. 14. Proœmium.

GUY'S HOSPITAL.

FISTULA BETWEEN THE GALL-BLADDER AND COLON;
PHTHISIS AND BRIGHT'S DISEASE; DIPHTHERITIC EX-
UDATION IN THE ILEUM; FATAL RESULT.

(Under the care of Dr. BARLOW.)

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