

SPASMODIC CHOLERA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am at all times unwilling to intrude my personal sufferings upon the notice of the profession, yet I am led to imagine that the following case of Asiatic cholera may not prove uninteresting, inasmuch as I think it presents some useful information to, at least, my junior brethren, in the treatment of that horrible disease.

In August last, which was a hot one, I travelled during four days through Kent, in an open chaise. Arriving at Margate on the 19th, and enjoying excellent health, I took two tepid shower-baths, daily, after breakfast, carefully avoiding fruits and vegetables. In the plenitude of health, strength, and spirits, on the evening of the 26th I got by exercise into a profuse perspiration, and, by way of refreshment, *credat Judæus!* drank a glass of cold ginger-beer! which I afterwards qualified with hot brandy and water.

I went to bed at twelve o'clock, but was shortly afterwards seized with pain in the bowels, followed by a copious bilious motion. I went to sleep, and at two o'clock was awakened by a similar cause, and again relieved. I again fell asleep, and slept four hours. At six o'clock I was aroused by a return of the pain, followed by a *quart*, at least, of "rice-water" motion. In less than ten minutes another; each motion preceded by violent and copious vomiting, when I summoned the man of the house to procure medical assistance. Mr. Hoffmann, jun., who fortunately resided close by, attended immediately, and to his judgment and skill, under Providence, I feel that I am indebted for my life. In an instant he saw the nature of the case, with all its impending danger. He promptly returned with pills, which contained each a quarter of a grain of opium, one of calomel, and two of the acetate of lead. I took four, but almost immediately rejected them. I swallowed four more, and repeated the dose every hour, until twenty-four were taken. The vomiting and diarrhoea were checked, and did not return. I verily believe that another such motion as the last would have been fatal. Then came the horrible spasms, which must be felt to be appreciated. To relieve them Mr. H. gave me two doses of calomel, of six grains each, in two hours, so that in six hours I took *six grains of opium, thirty-six of calomel, and forty-eight of acetate of lead!* To this I attribute my preservation. My thirst was insatiable, as may be supposed. I would have given the world for a draught of cold water, but that was expressly prohibited. I was allowed to moisten my parched mouth with a small effervescent draught occasionally. In less than an hour after Mr. H.'s first visit I perceived that my nails and fingers were blue, and a profuse cold sweat covered the body and extremities.

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I remained in a state nearly approaching to collapse from ten o'clock on Saturday, the 27th, until Monday morning, when I perceived that I was perfectly jaundiced. Brandy and arrow-root were as freely administered as I was able to take them. Mr. H. continued his attendance until the 6th of September, when I returned home quite convalescent, and I am now perfectly well, and have been so for the last three months.

Mr. Hoffman informed me that he was led to the adoption of his treatment of cholera from the effects of lead upon plumbers, and those engaged in the manufacture of the acetate, viz., colica pictorum; and, by adopting the converse of the proposition, he has succeeded in saving many lives, mine among the number. I should state that, with the view of supplying the loss of the serum and salts of the blood, Mr. H. prescribed, as an auxiliary, the "saline treatment," but I could not retain the mixture, and, as it threatened serious consequences, he abandoned it. I took but one rhubarb draught (on Monday), which acted once. The faces were black, but became gradually tinged with healthy bile, until my recovery. I suffered severely from ptyalism. My gums were dreadfully swollen and painful, but I soon got over that. It is a remarkable fact, yet extra-medical as it may appear, I will risk the mention of it here, that driven almost to desperation by a paroxysm of pain in my gums, I smoked a cigar, and was instantly relieved. As the remedy was not unpleasant I continued it "until cured." I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

T. W. WANSBROUGH.

King's-road, Chelsea,
March, 1843.

OPIUM-SMOKING.

To the Editor.—Sir: At page 586 of the "Medico-Chirurgical Review," for April, 1842, Dr. Johnson proposes the employment of opium-smoking in tetanus, hydrophobia, tic-douloureux (especially of the facial nerves), violent spasms, and painful diseases that defy the power of opium taken in the common way. Now, Sir, as it is the generally received opinion that asthma is a spasmodic affection, and as late experiments by Dr. Williams have demonstrated that the lungs and air-tubes are actually contracted to a very considerable degree, it appears highly probable that many cases of asthma would be benefitted by opium-smoking, which is much more rapid in its effects as well as more powerful. It appears not improbable, from the nature of asthma, that a few electric shocks might put an end to a fit, and I beg that you will make both suggestions known through the medium of THE LANCET. I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

J. PRESTON, Depôt Surgeon.
Cuddalore, Feb. 18, 1843.

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