ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF

PRUSSIC ACID IN CHOLERA.

By ROBERT GARNER, Esq., House Surgeon to St. Mary's Dispensary, Nottingham, &c. &c.

ALTHOUGH the prussic acid has disappointed the hopes of those who expected much from it in pulmonary diseases, yet in some morbid affections it certainly is a curative agent of power. Few, with Brera, will give it in pneumonia; and the progress of phthisis is as relentlessly fatal as ever; but the extensive use of it by some practitioners of eminence, proves that it may be trusted in several complaints; and whoever has tried it in the sickness and epigastric pain so common in dyspeptic patients, will not be sceptical of its efficacy.

Observing the good effects of the prussic acid in this last affection, I was first led, about two months since, to administer it in the vomiting which is so distressing in cholera; and I was surprised and pleased to find that it almost immediately put a stop to the symptom. I now have given it to many patients, as also has my friend Mr. Valentine, surgeon to St. Mary's Dispensary in this town, and in all the cases a few minims of the acid have cured the vomiting. It may be given with safety to young children. It appears to alleviate all the other symptoms of cholera, except the diarrhoea. No doubt, in many of our patients, the sickness would have soon spontaneously ceased, but this, I think, cannot be said of the following cases:—

CASE 1.

E. H., a woman of a delicate constitution, aged 25, came under my care July 18, 1831. Three days before I saw her, she had been attacked with violent vomiting and purging. I found her labouring under much fever, and pressure at the epigastric region gave pain. Her pulse was soft, small, and rapid. Her tongue was covered with a yellow coat. She complained much of numbness in the legs and arms; her stools were dark and offensive, but were evacuated less frequently than they had been. The vomiting was not in the least abated, and had produced great debility. Effervescent medicines, and pills of calomel and opium, had been regularly administered before I saw her, and she had been bled to twelve ounces. I directed two minims of prussic acid to be given her every two hours, in a dilute solution of gum acacia, and one grain of opium and five of calomel, to be taken in a pill in the evening.

The following day I was informed that

the vomiting had ceased after the second dose of the acid. She had taken and retained some sago. There was no pain in the epigastrium, and all the other symptoms were relieved; the diarrhoea was still considerable. Let her take directly *pulv. rhei c. ʒ ij*. On the 20th she was in every respect better. On the 21st the vomiting returned, but in a less violent degree, and was immediately stopped by the prussic acid. In a few days she was recovered from the effects of the complaint.

CASE 2.

A. C., 30 years of age, robust in constitution, came under my care July 23, 1831. She had been deranged in health for the last fortnight, and two days since took the measles, her children being ill of them. The day before I saw her, the eruption disappeared, and in the evening she was suddenly seized with severe purging and vomiting. She complained of pain in the back; there was tenderness of the epigastrium and abdomen, and she had cramp in the legs. The stools were very dark, the tongue red, the throat sore, and the pulse was hard, small, and frequent. I bled her to ten ounces, and a blister was applied to the pit of the stomach.

Mist. salin., ʒ j, *tertiis horis*;

Pil. saponis cum opio, gr. v, *quinti quaque hora*.

In the evening I found the vomiting and sickness increased by the bleeding. She had fainted every time she had been purged. I ordered a mixture, containing twelve minims of prussic acid, one-sixth part of which was to be taken every three hours.

July 24. The vomiting ceased after two doses of the mixture, and had not returned; the other symptoms were relieved. She was directed to put her feet into hot water at night.

July 25. Great purging had been produced by the pediluvium; this was subdued in a short time by common remedies.

June 30. Convalescent.

A case of cholera has just occurred, in which the vomiting and purging produced such prostration, that the patient's life appeared in much danger. Three doses of the acid were vomited the moment they were taken; the fourth was retained, and another dose quite stopped the sickness. In similar cases, the system might readily be subjected to the influence of the remedy in other ways than by being taken into the stomach.

Nottingham, Aug. 14th.