CASES OF
PULMONARY CONSUMPTION,
IN WHICH
NAPHTHA WAS EMPLOYED
WITHOUT SUCCESS.

By GEORGE P. MAY, M.D., Maldon.

THE record of facts is the sure method of testing the value of theories. The therapeutic powers of remedies, as well as their physiological action, can be estimated only by extensive observations; and it becomes the duty of every practical man to contribute, so far as his opportunities will allow, to the accomplishment of this end. When, under the imposing epithet of "specific," with the impress of respectable authority affixed to it, a remedy is vouchsafed to the world, in an especial manner does it behove every practitioner, as the natural guardian of the public health, to examine its claim to such a title; and, by careful investigation, conducted without prejudice, to satisfy himself of its value, before its adoption by a credulous public, whose grand characteristic is exhibited in an almost unlimited confidence in any remedy which wears the garb of novelty, provided it be lavish of promises, without exception or reservation.

Of all the diseases in the long catalogue of ills that flesh is heir to, it is well known that there is none which has so baffled the skill of the professor of the healing art, and set at nought his appliances, as *pulmonary consumption*; and, consequently, few have offered a finer field to the charlatan and quack for the exercise of their vocation. True it is that the investigations of pathologists of the current century have furnished us with an accurate view of the nature, origin, and progress of this dreadful malady, but still as much as ever it sets the resources of our art at defiance, still it continues to be the "opprobrium medicinæ," and with all the light of pathological truth beaming around us, we can no better than our ancestors prevent the deposit of the insidious granule, or, with any degree of certainty, check the progress of its destructive vegetation. Thousands of remedies have been proposed, and have, in their turn, been lauded, decried, and forgotten. Amongst modern claimants to the discovery of a specific for tubercular phthisis, Dr. Hastings holds a prominent place; and, indeed, if the extraordinary success which has attended his mode of treatment, as practised by himself, could be realised in the hands of others, his temples would be entitled to a wreath more durable than ever decked the victor's brow, and his memory to the benison of generations yet unborn. Previously to the appearance of Dr. Hastings' work, I commenced the naphtha treatment, and, after an attentive perusal of the book (although some of the cases there detailed appeared to me to

be deficient in many of the physical signs of genuine phthisis), I was not without some hopes that at last we had placed in our hands an agent which, if not in all cases capable of effecting a cure, at least would have a decided influence in ameliorating some of the distressing symptoms attendant upon the disease. These hopes, unfortunately, have not been realised. I subjoin a very brief abstract of each case in which I gave it, and I would premise that the naphtha was procured from Bell and Co., in Oxford-street, the source recommended by Dr. Hastings.

CASE I.

July 14, 1843. A. N., ætat. 32, has had cough and expectoration of opaque yellow matter for some months, with emaciation. Was able to pursue her occupation, that of a dressmaker, until the spring of the present year, when her debility was much increased. Percussion dull over the left side throughout its whole extent; respiration cavernous in the same side as low as the third rib; pectoriloquy perfect; percussion natural on the right side; respiration bronchial; no râle. To take ten drops of naphtha three times in a day. After taking it a few days, she "thought it did her cough good." She continued the naphtha without the least apparent benefit until within a few days of her death, which took place Sept. 11. Whilst taking the naphtha, the night perspirations were much increased.

CASE II.

July 13, 1843. S. M., ætat. 20; four months ago, being in service in London, was attacked with cough, accompanied with much debility and languor; returned home a fortnight since. Countenance unhealthy; expectorates globular masses, of a greenish-white colour; pulse rapid; perspires much at night. The subclavicular spaces on either side are much flattened, and preternaturally sonorous on percussion; under the right clavicle the inspiration is accompanied with a single moist crepitation; pectoriloquy perfect. On the left side the respiration is rough and grating, and a puff is heard to strike at the bottom of the cylinder at each effort at articulation; sounds of the heart diffuse. After taking ten drops of naphtha three times daily for three weeks, the expectoration somewhat lessened, but again increased in a few days; the dose was augmented to fifteen drops. Colliquative diarrhoea set in, which was with difficulty checked by opium. As she considered the naphtha aggravated the diarrhoea, she was ordered to omit it for a few days, but as little alteration was observed in the frequency of the motions, she resumed it; becoming, however, rapidly worse, she finally abandoned it, after having taken it about a month. Died Dec. 3.

CASE III.

Aug. 18, 1843. Mrs. S., ætat. 30, had been affected during the last winter with cough and shortness of breath, which confined her to her house. During the summer her health improved, so that she was able to take walking exercise in the open air. Towards autumn her health again declined; she was troubled with night perspirations, cough, and expectoration; catamenia suppressed. Percussion elicited a dull sound under the right clavicle, in which situation a small crepitation is heard at the end of each inspiration. On the left side the inspiration is broken. Took the naphtha, in doses of fifteen drops, for nearly a month, when it was abandoned at her own request. During this time the symptoms progressed from bad to worse without any mitigation. She is now entirely confined to her bed, and her death is daily expected.

CASE IV.

July 20, 1843. O. J., ætat. 24; family consumptive; had dry cough at the beginning of the same year, which did not much interfere with his health until the middle of May, when he was attacked with hæmoptysis, which lasted more or less for two days, since which time he remained much debilitated. Face pallid and thin; coughs much, and expectorates mucus with yellowish masses suspended in it; is capable of walking about, and can lie on either side; pulse 94; perspires at night; percussion rather dull in the left subclavicular region, as far as the third rib; respiratory murmur in this situation feeble, and occasionally broken; a faint crepitation may sometimes be detected at the termination of each expiration; much vocal resonance; percussion under the line of the right clavicle slightly dull; respiration over the whole of this side puerile; no râle. He commenced taking naphtha, three times daily, in doses of ten drops, which were gradually increased to twenty. The only effects observed were that it produced severe griping, aggravated the diarrhoea, and, while under its use, perspirations were most profuse. To control its tendency to increase the diarrhoea, a few drops of laudanum were given in conjunction with the naphtha.

With much perseverance this patient persisted in its use, although to him a very disagreeable medicine, until the 1st of September, a period of six weeks, when he could not be persuaded to go on with it longer. During the time he was taking it, the cough, expectoration, hectic fever, and emaciation increased rapidly; and stethoscopic examination discovered progressive softening and disorganisation of the upper part of the left lung. He died in October.

CASE V.

Aug. 18, 1843. Mrs. S., grocer, of stout,

robust make, has for several winters been troubled with cough and expectoration. In the summer of the present year spat blood for two or three days, since which has had much expectoration of muco-purulent matter, frequently tinged with blood; has lost flesh, but is still capable of partially serving in her shop. Percussion dull under the left subclavicular space, which is considerably flattened, and in which situation a moist crepitous râle is heard. To take twenty drops of naphtha three times a day.

Sept. 28. Is evidently weaker; cough violent; expectoration copious, and much dyspnoea on exertion. States that the only effect which she can ascribe to the drops is the induction of some degree of headach after taking them.

After persevering in the use of naphtha nearly two months, without benefit, she discontinued it, at which time the crepitating râle had given place to a strong and extensive gargouillement. Her condition is now much the same as when she discontinued the use of naphtha.

CASE VI.

Aug. 12, 1843. Mrs. S., ætat. 29, has had cough since last Christmas, but without much disturbance of the general health, until about three months ago; she then experienced debility and night perspirations. Her present symptoms are as above detailed; expectoration sparing; pulse very rapid; catamenia suppressed for two months; percussion very dull below the left clavicle, inspiration here terminating in a slight mucous râle; expiration prolonged, rough, and blowing; pectoriloquy distinct. After taking the naphtha in doses of twenty drops, for a month, without any benefit, and with rapid advancement of the disease, she discontinued it.

CASE VII.

Oct. 1, 1843. J. F., ætat. 32, states that he has had cough for some weeks; expectorated recently about a teaspoonful of blood; suffers from shortness of breath, but is tolerably robust in appearance; on percussion a trace of dulness is perceived immediately under the right clavicle; the inspiration here is feeble; expiration broken. After he had taken twenty drops of naphtha three times a day, for a fortnight, with little or no relief to his cough or breathing, I did not feel justified, after the naphtha had hitherto entirely failed in my hands, in omitting any other means which I thought might be beneficial to the patient. I therefore kept up counter-irritation under each clavicle for several days; at the same time he continued the use of the naphtha. Under this plan his health improved, his cough moderated, and his breathing became less difficult, and for the last three weeks he has been able to fulfil the duties of his avocation, that of a farm-labourer. He ascribes his recovery to the

repeated blisters. Whether these, or the naphtha, be entitled to the credit, I shall forbear to express any opinion.

From an attentive consideration of the cases which have been imperfectly detailed above, I cannot hesitate to state that, at present, I am sceptical as to any beneficial influence exercised by naphtha in cases of true tubercular phthisis. At the same time I shall not fail to give it a more extended trial, as opportunity offers.

Maldon, Dec. 20, 1843.

CASE OF
RECOVERY FROM A COMPOUND
FRACTURE OF THE SKULL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg the insertion of the following case of injury of the brain in your valuable Journal, if sufficiently interesting, and I have the honour to be, Sir, your very obedient servant,

A. BANON, M.D.,
Surgeon to Jervis-street Hospital.
Mountjoy-square South, Dublin,
Dec. 18, 1843.

John Cullen, ætat. 12, admitted into Jervis-street Hospital, October 1, 1843. In the morning of that day he was knocked down and stunned by a kick from a horse on the left side of the head. He was immediately carried by his friends to the hospital; he managed, with some assistance, to get up stairs, and staggered into the ward. On examination there was found a compound and comminuted fracture, engaging the upper and anterior part of the left parietal bone near its anterior and superior angle. It was a flap wound, patent and crescentic, with its convexity towards the temporal bone. The posterior canthus of the fracture was particularly indented, having probably been opposed to the cock of the shoe. The bone was here forced through the dura mater upon the brain. Some of the brain had escaped through the wound, and was scattered on the scalp. No other injury was detected. The boy was conscious, and apparently in possession of all his faculties but that of speech; general symptoms not striking; respiration tranquil; pulse regular, but slightly accelerated; has vomited since the accident; stomach and bowels now undisturbed. On consultation with the other surgeons of the hospital, it was decided to leave matters as they were, and not to attempt the elevation of the depressed bone. The symptoms were not urgent, and so circumstanced was the fracture that any attempt to raise or remove the bone would only be partially successful, and additional injury might be done to the already lacerated brain; besides, experience has proved that

cases like this have done well without the interference of the surgeon. The head being shaved, and cold lotion applied, he was ordered bleeding to twelve ounces.

R *Powdered jalap*, eight grains;
Protochloride of mercury, three grains;

Powdered ginger, two grains. Mix for a powder, to be taken immediately. A purgative enema to be administered at night if the bowels be not previously moved; poultice to the wound; strict injunctions given that he should be carefully watched.

2. He slept badly last night; is drowsy to-day; pulse 60, and a little hard; face flushed; aphonia persists; tongue, on protrusion, appears to be slightly drawn to the right side. The usual signs of paralysed motor energy on the right side of the face are faintly traceable. I determined on following the plan of Mr. Carmichael, of this city, in similar cases, of bringing the system rapidly under the influence of mercury, and accordingly ordered—

R *Protochloride of mercury*, six grains;
Powdered refined sugar, twelve grains. Mix for six powders; one to be taken three times a day. A dozen leeches to be applied to the temples.

3. No remarkable change; complains of headach. Ordered six leeches to the temples, and to continue the powders. Pulse slightly hard, and 60; makes no attempt to speak; he is drowsy, and rather irritable when spoken to, but perfectly conscious. Vomiting recurred this day.

4. Still in the same state of listlessness; gums slightly sore; well-marked mercurial fetor; bowels disturbed with involuntary fecal dejections; pulse 48, slow, small, and weak; aphonia persists; complains of pain in the head; discharge from wound copious; some granulations sprout on its circumference.

R *Castor oil*, half an ounce;
Tincture of rhubarb, half a drachm;
Tincture of henbane, eight drops;
Cinnamon water, an ounce. Mix for a draught, to be taken immediately. Omit the powders.

6. Still listless and feeble; pulse 40, and weak; slight strabismus of both eyes is discernible. Can now, for the first time, make use of certain monosyllables, as No and Yes.

8. Gums still sore and swollen; appears anxious for food; slept well last night; complains of headach; bowels regular; pulse 44. Ordered six leeches to the temples.

10. Improved in every respect since last report; countenance more lively; pulse 52, and soft; copious and healthy discharge from wound; tongue clean, and bowels regular. He is more alive and impressed by external objects; attempts to answer ques-