

A NEW APPARATUS FOR THE RELIEF OF WRITERS' CRAMP.

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THE device, of which a cut is here given, has given complete satisfaction in the case of writers' cramp, for which it was designed.

The patient, who has used it continuously for more than a year, has been enabled by its means to continue his occupation of book-keeper, which he otherwise would have been obliged to give up. He assures me that he is able to write with it with almost as much facility as he could before his hand was affected.

The principle upon which it is designed is, that of making use, for the purpose of holding the pen and writing, of the muscles antagonistic to those affected with cramp. In this particular case, the muscles in which the spasm chiefly and primarily occurred, were the flexors of the three fingers which held the pen, viz., thumb, fore-finger, and middle finger. The other muscles of the hand were also similarly more or less implicated.

It occurred to the writer that if a means could be devised of holding the pen by the opposite motion of the fingers, that is opening or extending them, a rest could be given to the flexors which might tend to cure the disease, and at any rate would render writing possible.

For this purpose a cast was taken of the hand, or rather of the thumb and first two fingers while holding a pen in the position for writing. Around this cast was bent a piece of tin which followed the contour of the fingers. In this way three fingers of a tin glove were obtained, accurately adjusted to the position essential for writing. The tips were then cut off, allowing the fingers to project, and a split tube, of the calibre of a lead pencil, was soldered between the thumb and fore-

finger in the position occupied by the pen in the cast. The whole has been japanned.

To use the apparatus, a pencil or penholder is inserted in the tube and the corresponding fingers thrust into the tin glove. The apparatus is held in position not by flexing the fingers, but by separating them and slightly pressing their backs against the sides of the tin glove. The extenders are thus brought into use instead of the flexors. If we prefer, the glove can be held in position by means of friction alone, by thrusting the



fingers firmly within. With a little practice it is not at all difficult to write with facility with this instrument. The motion is obtained from the wrist, or shoulder, as preferred, but the former is better, being more natural.

The advantages of this machine are :

1. It brings into use the muscles antagonistic to those affected by spasm.
2. It enables the hand and pen to be held in the position continually used for writing.

3. Its use is easily acquired.
4. It is not unsightly, and is portable.

As cases of writer's cramp differ much from one another, this particular apparatus would not be applicable to all cases, but various modifications would probably be made to adapt it to many cases.

The spasm of the knuckles, in the case of my patient, has not been mitigated to any appreciable extent, as he still cannot write without the glove; but this may in part be due, as he says, to the fact that he has made little effort to hold it by extension of the fingers, preferring the more lazy method of thrusting his fingers firmly within and employing friction. This could easily be prevented by making the tin fingers a little larger, and closing their tips.¹

The Use of Trional as a Hypnotic.—In the "Neurologisches Centralblatt," No. 25, 1892, Dr. Brie, of Bonn, gives an exhaustive account of his experience with this recent addition to our therapeutic armamentarium.

He describes trional as a white powder, similar to sulphonal. It is difficult to dissolve in water at the ordinary temperature, but is easily soluble in hot water, and in alcohol or ether. The watery solution has a slightly bitter taste. He had used it in forty-two cases of insanity, about 360 single doses having been administered of one to three grammes. It was dissolved in hot water and given a half hour before retiring. As a general rule sleep followed within an hour.

According to the results of his numerous observations, trional possesses an extraordinarily favorable influence. It should be the first drug mentioned and recommended as a hypnotic. He believes it will take the place of sulphonal, and will invariably be given the preference, as it is almost tasteless, is easily administered, acts rapidly, and its after effects are rarely or very slightly manifest.

Its use is indicated in simple insomnia, and also in the sleeplessness of insanity associated with restlessness and marked excitement.

W. M. L.

¹ The apparatus was made from the cast furnished by me, at the machine shop of the Children's Hospital, this city. It would be better, though not absolutely necessary, to have a special cast made for each case.