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ON SPASM OF THE STOMACH.

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DISEASE may go on, even to the disorganization of vital structures, without producing a moiety of suffering, compared with some of the spasmodic affections of the stomach. I allude particularly to cramp of that organ. Human endurance could bear up only for a brief period, under the excruciating torture of this affection. I speak from personal and painful experience on this point, having been myself a frequent sufferer from youth to old age. In its milder attacks, cramp of the stomach is almost insupportable; but in its gravest seizure, I can compare it to nothing but having the stomach screwed up in a vice, to the utmost point of human endurance.

Several causes acting separately, develop cramp of the stomach, viz., The presence of indigestible substances in the stomach; too great repletion of the organ; the translation of gout and rheumatism to it; the too rapid abstraction of caloric from it, in consequence of the ingestion of large draughts of cold drink, whilst the body is overheated; and lastly, the excessive generation of flatus within the stomach.

The foregoing are the most prominent of the remote causes of cramp of the stomach; other causes are enumerated by systematic writers, but they are of such infrequent occurrence, that I will pass them by for the present. Cramp of the stomach ought never to be mistaken for gastritis; there is but one circumstance that can mislead, and that is the excessive tenderness of the organ. In my own case, the slightest pressure over the stomach was painful. But then when we look at the suddenness of the attack, and the rapidity with which the affection attains its climax, and take into consideration the extremely rare occurrence of idiopathic gastritis, we can scarcely commit an error in the diagnosis. So rare, indeed, is idiopathic gastritis, that Dr. Watson, in his very extensive practice, never saw a case of it. I myself have never seen a case of it. The great infrequency of idiopathic gastritis is more fully evidenced by the testimony of Louis, who in six years of his attendance at the Hospital La Charité, out of 6000 cases and 500 dissections, did not find a single case of this disease.

Dependent on such a variety of causes, the treatment of cramp of the stomach must necessarily be variant. Where indigestible substances or

excessive repletion have induced spasm of the stomach, the very obvious indication is the exhibition of an emetic. I have given the preference to ipecacuanha, or to the sulphate of zinc; they both act promptly and efficiently, particularly the last. I have sometimes been astonished at the relief afforded by the exhibition of the white vitriol. Two cases in particular of cramp of the stomach, come up in vivid reminiscence before me. They were both females—the first quite young. Her sufferings were exceedingly great. My inquiries elicited the fact, that in consequence of missing her dinner, her evening meal had been very heavy. I gave her immediately an emetic of the white vitriol—about a scruple, and the quantity of food ejected was so unreasonably large, as to extort from me something more than a smile. The relief was immediate—she needed nothing more. The other case was a woman of about 55 years of age. I heard her screams, before I entered her door-yard. Her pain was excruciating, and extorted the most doleful lamentations. My inquiries soon satisfied me, that her stomach was oppressed by its ingesta. She had been eating freely of mince pie, and had completed her meal with the addition of several apples. The emetic gave her prompt and complete relief.

I have selected these cases from a great number of similar ones. Both these patients might possibly have been relieved by antispasmodics and opiates, but it would have required more time, and a very large exhibition of these articles to have produced the desired effect. The emetic gave immediate relief. I do not say that it is necessary to resort to it in every case, where the patient has been guilty of imprudence in respect either to the quantity or quality of the food taken into his stomach; his sufferings may not be so very great—the substance taken into his stomach not so indigestible, and the quantity not so inordinate, but that moderate stimulation of the organ may be sufficient for the relief of the patient. The point that I would insist upon is, that in very many of these cases, the emetic affords the most prompt relief, and is the only trust-worthy remedy. After the operation of the emetic, a large sinapism over the epigastrium completes the cure. This last remedy, I consider as a *sine qua non* in all the cases which I have noticed, in my enumeration of the causes of cramp of the stomach. It should be large, and I prefer to have it applied as warm as can be borne.

Where cramp of the stomach has been produced by large draughts of cold drink, whilst the body has been overheated, the very obvious indication is to restore the suddenly-abstracted caloric, by large draughts of warm drink—particularly table tea, as being most grateful and less likely to produce nausea. Opium and stimulation should not be neglected, and a large sinapism applied to the epigastrium, but it is in the free exhibition of chloroform that I would confide.

Chloroform in its *internal exhibition*, I consider as *one* of the most important revelations which science has made to suffering humanity; it stands forth pre-eminent for its antispasmodic powers. A considerable experience in its use enables me to speak confidently of its value. It is, however, in cramp of the stomach particularly, that I would call attention to its great value as a remedial agent. In all the remaining forms

of this affection, it is the remedy in which I have the most confidence. In cramp of the stomach from retrocedent gout and rheumatism, whilst I would employ this article, I would also resort to obvious auxiliary remedies, such as inviting the return of the disease to forsaken parts by sinapisms and warmth ; but I pass by their consideration for the present.

I have stated at the commencement of this article, my own liability to spasm of the stomach. My first attack occurred whilst I was a student of medicine. It took place in the night, and not being willing to call up my preceptor, I took two grains of solid opium, which I had a few days before procured from the poppy. It removed the spasm of my stomach. The two next attacks which I had, were in the first year after I commenced practice ; they were both of unusual severity. I took, each time, somewhere about 180 or 200 drops of laudanum, before I obtained relief. The medicine was not *dropped*, but *poured* out into a spoon ; I think, however, that I can safely say it was this quantity. Perhaps this quantity of laudanum was unnecessarily large, but I was distracted with pain, and was prescribing for myself. When I got easy, I was alarmed at the large doses of the anodyne which I had taken. I did not, however, sleep more than four or five hours after ; but although a very young man at the time, I was so completely prostrated from the effects of the pain and the laudanum, as to be confined to my bed the following day. I began to think that opium was not exactly adapted to my case, and I found in the saturated alcoholic tincture of camphor, an article which gave me more prompt relief. Twenty or thirty drops of camphor produced better results than double the quantity of laudanum. Several years passed by before I had another grave attack of cramp of the stomach. The lighter attacks (and they were almost insupportable) yielded readily to the tincture of camphor. Three years since, I had an attack of unusual severity, in which the camphor did not bring its usual relief. I had labored a number of days under diarrhoea, and had taken early in the morning two grains of plumbi acetate, with half a grain of pulverized opium. My stomach was empty when it was seized with spasm. I resorted immediately to the camphor, but my pains increased in violence—they were agonizing. I started to go up stairs to my bed-chamber, but when I arrived at the foot of the stairs I found my strength failing so rapidly, that I was obliged to lay down upon the carpet. I thought myself to be dying. My fingers, applied to my wrist, informed me that the pulse was extinct. I was in a state of approaching syncope, although I possessed perfect consciousness. I requested thirty drops of chloroform to be given me. I did not wait to have it diluted with water, but took it immediately as it was dropped into the spoon. The relief was almost instantaneous. As soon as the chloroform entered my stomach, pain began to abate, and in a few minutes was gone. I still had a large sinapism applied to my stomach. I now had somewhat to regret not having had the chloroform diluted ; it had terribly burned my mouth, but perhaps its efficacy might have been increased by the omission. The duration of this attack was about thirty minutes ; its invasion was sudden and violent, and the pain went on with steady increment to its acme. And now, had not the mercy of God interposed,

such intensity of suffering had in a few minutes more terminated my life. Let me here erect an Ebenezer, and inscribe thereon my grateful acknowledgments to Almighty Goodness.

I had not another visitation of this affection, until a few days since. I again had diarrhœa, and took half a grain of pulverized opium upon going to bed at night. In about an hour, the cramp in my stomach came on. I took thirty drops of camphor, but without relief. The chloroform was now taken, and a sinapism applied—the relief was prompt, but by no means so much so, as from chloroform three years before.

It may have been mere coincidence, but it is certainly a curious circumstance, that immediately before these two last attacks of cramp in the stomach, I had taken each time half a grain of opium for the suppression of diarrhœa—the first time combined with plumbi acetas, and the second time alone. The first time I was somewhat disposed to lay blame to the plumbi acetas, although I had never witnessed such a result from its use; but the second time the opium was used alone. Now did the opium and the spasm stand in the relation of cause and effect? Such a supposition is contrary to all therapeutic teaching. Yet the rapidity with which the cramp followed upon the opium, excites in my mind a suspicion that the opium had somehow an agency in the production of the spasm. I do not wish to speculate much upon this subject, but is it not possible that I may have *acquired* an idiosyncrasy to opium? It is an article which I had not taken for thirty-five years before. We know that there are some curious idiosyncrasies with respect to opium, and although somewhat of a digression, I shall relate one, for the practical lesson which it teaches. About thirty-five years since, I attended a lady with psoas abscess. She was under my care near a year. I opened the abscess with a lancet, and introduced a long waxed tent, which closed up the outlet made for the pus, and which was daily removed for its exit. The tent was used for nine months. She completely recovered. It became frequently necessary, during my attendance, to administer anodynes for the relief of pain. Forty or fifty drops of laudanum would always remove her pain, but it left her restless, nervous, *vigilant*. She needed an anodyne, and ten drops of laudanum did for her, what fifty drops would not do. Ten drops of laudanum relieved her pain, calmed all inquietude, removed her vigilance, and kept her easy for twenty-four hours at a time. She ever afterwards took laudanum in this dose. The fact is worthy of record, and gives some plausibility to the opinion advanced.

I have dwelt so long upon the circumstances of my own case, as to preclude me from introducing any additional cases of cramp of the stomach. Suffice it to state, that the same night in which I had my last attack, my next-door neighbor had a severe attack of the same affection, arising from translation of sciatic rheumatism. The enemy was dislodged from its new location, by chloroform administered by my son.

The doses in which I have administered the chloroform, have not been large. I have found from twenty-five to fifty or sixty drops amply sufficient, and have in no instance given more than eighty drops. In this instance it proved abortive. The patient's eyes were of an icteri-

tious tinge, and he complained of great nausea ; he was of a bilious habit. I now gave him a full dose of ipecacuanha, which operated well and removed completely the pain in his stomach. The spasm of his stomach was severe. This, I believe, was the only instance in which I have been disappointed in the use of chloroform.

In that form of spasm of the stomach in which there is extrication of immense quantities of flatus, in addition to the chloroform I have found the carminatives of great benefit. A strong tea of fennel, anise, coriander, &c., has an excellent effect. In the internal administration of the chloroform, it is important to agitate the vessel in which it has been mixed with water, as it is so heavy that it immediately falls to the bottom of the vessel. If time would admit for a solution of gum Arabic to be prepared, or infusion of slippery elm to be made, they would be the preferable vehicles for the chloroform, as it would be held in suspension by them.

The question may here be asked—Would not the inhalation of chloroform, as being more prompt in its action, be preferable to the administration of the article by the mouth ? I unhesitatingly answer no. I should for my part consider it unsound practice, to administer this most potent of the anæsthesia, and one so little under our control, in this manner to a patient whose great nervous centres had received so severe a shock, as results from cramp of the stomach. In my opinion there would be great danger from the powerful sedation of the chloroform in those cases in which the lamp of life was burning with flickering light.

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NECROSIS AND EXCISION OF PART OF THE LOWER JAW.

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At the present time it is not my purpose to dwell upon the causes most frequently operating in the production of necrosis of the jaws ; neither do I intend to search out and follow nature through the intricate ways by which she accomplishes her object, in casting off the deadened bone. In many cases of necrosis the sequestrum is separated, liberated, and a perfect substitute formed, the entire process being accomplished through a continuous chain of events, uninterrupted till perfected. In other instances it is not so : the process is retarded, arrested ; sharp irritation or wasting hectic settles on the sufferer ; the exciting cause *must* be taken away—a joint becomes implicated and opened, rendering it necessary to remove the limb altogether ; or again, life may be threatened from the wounding of a large bloodvessel by the separated shaft of a long bone, or by a detached spicula. Lastly, the sequestrum, started from its bed by the spasmodic action of neighboring muscles, may become a source of so much irritation to surrounding parts, as imperatively to demand its excision ; *this*, as a cause for operative interference, I shall now proceed to illustrate by a remarkable case which recently occurred in hospital practice.