Original Communications.

THE COLD BATH DURING MENSTRUATION.

By C. G. Putnam, M.D., Boston.

The habit of cold bathing is daily becoming more prevalent and, whether as a means of promoting health or simply as a luxury, its deprivation is felt to be a serious loss. Especially is its invigorating influence needed when to the summer’s heat are added the languor and debility of the menstrual period.

Having been often consulted in this regard, I have for many years advised a continuance of the customary general bath during this period. In the absence of any precedent, this advice was not given, at first, without some anxiety, inasmuch as it was opposed to traditional custom, and was, apparently, in conflict with judicious rules. But the inconsistency is more apparent than real, for, whatever the reason, whether prolonged application, suppressed transpiration, or some peculiarity in transmission, the influence upon the pelvic organs of cold propagated from the feet is different from that applied to the whole surface as in the general bath. The latter, moreover, unlike the local cold, is not depressing but exhilarating, and is followed by a healthy reaction.

Be this as it may, while there has not to my knowledge occurred any untoward accident, there has generally been a positive gain in health and comfort. I have been told that the flow has occasionally been retarded for a few minutes, but only to be restored the more freely.

I would not be understood to advise the bath at the menstrual period and only then. We should feel also some hesitation in recommending to one who, if not in the habit of daily cold bathing, had not at least some experience of its effects in ordinary states of health. Regard, too, should be had to the state of the system and to special idiosyncrasies. There are those to whom even the usual washing of the face and neck with cold water at this period is disagreeable. There are those again to whom, under any circumstances, the general bath, instead of being grateful, is disagreeable, and perhaps prejudicial.

In sea-bathing, the well-known rules should be scrupulously observed, viz., to choose the forenoon rather than the afternoon—to enter the water while yet warm, and to leave it before getting chilled. In order to avoid headache, it is desirable thoroughly to immerse the whole head. To most women this is attended with too much inconvenience, but the forehead and back of the neck should be immersed as freely as possible.

P.S.—A medical friend at my elbow suggests that the “inconvenience” may not amount to much, as, in the present phase of civilization, it is often possible for the hair to be high and dry though the head be never so wet.

A CASE OF POISONING BY STRAMONIUM.

By C. W. Stevens, M.D., Charlestown.

Miss H., aged 28, being affected with an attack of asthma, applied to a Boston botanic practitioner, who gave her a “handful of stramonium leaves, and directed her to steep them in a pint of water, and then drink freely of it.” At 2.30 P.M., of May 26, she drank a teacupful of the infusion. In about an hour she was taken with a feeling of faintness, and on trying to go for water staggered like a drunken person, and with difficulty returned to the sofa. I was called in a few minutes. Found her in great distress, complaining of dizziness, faintness, and presentiment of impending death. Her pupils were dilated to their fullest extent, her skin was hot, the pulse 120 and irregular, while the heart was beating in a tumultuous manner. The family had no idea of the cause of her sickness, but on my pressing questions they brought me a bowl of infusion of stramonium. They were horrified to learn that stramonium and