power of giving it in some states in which it is to be given at night, and its operation is not required until the morning; the smallness of the volume in which it may be used, the shape of pill into which it is so easily made, and which disguises so well its bitterness, are all of them subjects worthy our consideration.

From the circumstance of the alkalies and the carbonates rendering it more soluble, it is often combined with them, and we are hence furnished with weapons which, used with skill and care, enable us more certainly to combat disease. Thus, with soap, although we may diminish its intensity of action, we render it more quickly purgative. If, with Dr. Hamilton, we cannot quite agree that it is almost a universal remedy, that the most formidable maladies will yield to its effects, still it is to be acknowledged that in a vast number of chronic disorders it is invaluable; that in the obstinate constipation to which the artist, the student, the aged, and the sedentary are subject, from inactivity of the liver and of the sanguiferous system, it is, under the control of the skilful medical man, a drug which deserves the highest commendation; and though from its abuse in the vast number of quack medicines and patent pills, it has been the source of mischief, and has been occasionally condemned, we possess nothing that we could substitute for it that has more claims to our consideration and careful examination.

CASE EXHIBITING CERTAIN CONSEQUENCES
RESULTING FROM

IRREGULAR ACTION OF THE HEART

CAUSED BY PERICARDITIS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Should you consider the following case possessed of sufficient interest to merit a place in your valuable Journal, I will feel much obliged by its insertion. I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

R. U. CASHMAN, M.D., L.R.C.S.I.
Cloyne, Ireland, July 13, 1838.

October 27, 1837, John Browne, aged 23, a farmer's servant, of stout make, and sanguine temperament, states that about twelve months ago he had been confined to bed with pains in the joints of his legs and arms, headach, loss of appetite, and other febrile symptoms, caused by sleeping under the night air; that after a time he obtained some relief, still suffering, though not severely, from the pains in the joint, until about a fortnight ago, when in consequence of a repetition of the original cause, his complaints were considerably aggravated, again confining him to bed, where he has remained until the present, not having had any medical

advice either for this or the former attack. On visiting him this day, for the first time, his countenance strongly attracted my attention, it was peculiarly expressive of pain and anxiety, his lips trembling, and perspiration running down his face; on questioning him as to the seat of pain, he laid his hand on the region of the heart, saying "that it was the principal cause of his sufferings;" he also complained of severe pain in the joints, but the former was particularly referred to during the paroxysms, which attacked him once or twice a day in the following manner. They came on with a general tremor of all the muscles, he lay perfectly insensible to all external objects, the eyelids rapidly moving up and down, perspiration flowed freely from all parts of the body, respiration quick and panting, pulse ranging from 110 to 120, small and irregular. After the lapse of about five minutes, the tremors cease, the limbs become quite motionless and relaxed; the action of the eyelids (which remain half open) cease, the eyes assume a fixed vacant gaze. Respiration becomes remarkably slow and stertorous; pulse still quick and small; the linen quite saturated with perspiration. After a period of about fifteen minutes from the commencement of the paroxysm he gradually regains his faculties, recognising his attendants like a person recovering from a state of syncope, and making efforts to speak before he has the power of doing so, the ideas being evidently in his mind though he cannot express them, not having regained a sufficient influence over the muscles of articulation. Appetite has been very indifferent for some time, tongue natural, skin dotted over with a great number of petechiæ, possessing the characters of those of purpura; he could not tell what was the duration of this symptom, as he did not observe it until I drew his attention to it. Gums appear soft and spongy; says that he bleeds occasionally from the mouth and nose, also that he passed blood per anum. To live on light farinaceous diet. Twelve leeches to the precordial region. Colchicum draught immediately.

28. Slept indifferently; complains of great lassitude and debility, suffering severely from the pains about the heart and joints; had two paroxysms since last visit. Repeat leeches and draught.

8 o'clock, P.M. Sent for in a great hurry to see him, the messenger giving me to understand that he was dying. On inquiry, it appeared that he had got into one of his usual fits, and that having continued in it longer than on former occasions, his friends became alarmed and sent for me; I found him in the following state:—Extremities quite cold; respiration very slow and labouring; grinding of the teeth, (a symptom which I did not observe before, though his attendants frequently did); in other respects the same as described during a former paroxysm.—

Ordered to take some warm wine; frictions with hot flannel to the surface, and bottles of hot water to the feet. By perseverance in these measures he was gradually roused from this state, appearing much more exhausted than usual. Tincture of opium 30 drops immediately; to have recourse to the wine and frictions should he fall into the same state again.

29. No recurrence of the fit since; slept tolerably; his sufferings much increased, particularly the pain in the region of the heart; pulse 97; quick, with an occasional intermission. Twenty leeches to the left side; the colchicum draught immediately.

31. Great debility; petechiæ more numerous; has had some bleeding from the gums; pulse 100, quick and irregular; bowels freely evacuated by means of the colchicum. Owing to the general state of the system I did not deem it prudent to repeat the leeches (which always bleed very freely and for a considerable time), though anxious to do so, being strongly impressed that there was inflammation of the pericardium still unsubdued. I therefore had recourse to counter-irritation by means of blisters or tartar emetic ointment, still continuing the colchicum as a purgative.

Nov. 3. Debility still very alarming; have remarked that during the last few days the paroxysms occurred periodically night and morning. Says he does not suffer so much during their continuance as formerly, though they last equally as long, and maintain all the characters as before described. Four grains of sulphate of quinine with 20 drops of sulphuric acid every night; the colchicum draught every second day; blister to be dressed with savine ointment.

7. After taking the quinine for a few days the fits did not occur so regularly, which I attributed to its use; under this impression I continued its exhibition regularly with the colchicum and counter-irritation. Under this treatment he experienced a decided improvement; it was, therefore, followed up for sometime modified according to circumstances, and he still continued to improve, gradually regaining his strength; the paroxysms neither attacking him so often nor continuing so long, being more free from pain than he had been for several months previously, but his health was not sufficiently restored so as to enable him to resume his arduous employment for nearly three months subsequently.

On reviewing the foregoing symptoms, and considering the history of the case, I am inclined to attribute the cause of the affection for which I was consulted, to inflammation of the pericardium transferred from the extremities to this membrane; and I am also of opinion that the paroxysms which attacked him generally twice a day, were induced by irregular action of the heart caused by inflammation of its invest-

ing membrane; that the acute stage of inflammation had subsided when the quinine was administered, I am inclined to infer from the beneficial effects which attended its use at this stage of the disease; invigorating remedies were indicated, and might they not have acted by giving tone to the system generally, and thence enable the heart to perform its proper function with due regularity? That there was a hæmorrhagic tendency was very apparent from the numerous petechiæ before alluded to, and also from the fact that whenever there was a breach of surface, it was with considerable difficulty the oozing of the blood could be restrained. Was this state the consequence of deranged function of the centre of the circulation, or was it mere coincidence? I cannot answer the question, but I observed the fact that according as the inflammatory symptoms subsided, the petechiæ on the body diminished and finally disappeared altogether.

STRAPPING THE HEAD IN CHRONIC HYDROCEPHALUS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—I see, by one of your July Numbers, that Dr. Engelmann has been trying my plan of strapping the head for the cure of chronic hydrocephalus, with success, in Germany. It is now nearly fifteen years since I published my two first cases, in the "Medical Repository," one of which was copied into your first volume, and it has certainly rather surprised me that it has not been tried by any English practitioner since that time; at least, I have seen no published case; but I suppose it was in consequence of the more brilliant plan by Dr. Conquest having been soon after submitted to the public. However, rather than run a trocar into the brains of my patients, with the uncertain success even of Dr. Conquest himself, I have preferred adhering to my own plan, and that with invariable success in all cases wherein it was applicable; and I have taken care not to use it where the chances of a successful issue were but slight. I hope, that the publication of Dr. Engelmann's cases will induce some of our own medical men to give the plan a trial. I should be happy to supply every information derived from my own experience. I am, Sir, yours &c. J. F. BARNARD.

Bath, August 5, 1838.

* * * Our correspondent has mainly to blame himself for the neglect into which his practice has fallen. If, as Mr. Barnard says, "he has employed the practice of bandaging with invariable success in all cases wherein it was applicable," he should place those cases upon record, and we will feel much pleasure in affording him the best means of giving them publicity.