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PART I.
ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

ART. IX.—*On the Nature and Treatment of Epilepsy.* By
ROBERT J. GRAVES, M. D., F. R. S.

THAT epilepsy is not necessarily connected with perceptible change of structure in any portion of the nervous system has been abundantly proved, not only by the later investigations of others, but by the cases I myself long since published. A knowledge of this fact, pathologically so important, ought to encourage physicians to persevere in searching for remedies capable of alleviating or curing this distressing malady, for where organic disease does not necessarily exist there can be no insuperable impediment to recovery.

The following cases are brought forward partly for the purpose of recording the effects of the *Cotyledon umbilicus*, first recommended by Dr. Salter, of Poole, and partly with the view of detailing the symptoms of some rare and instructive varieties of the disease.

CASE I.—*Epilepsy of several years' duration cured by the Cotyledon*^a.

Mr. J. M——, now aged 22, had an attack of measles in 1847, followed in four months by a slight fit of epilepsy at night. The epileptic seizures soon became more violent, and finally recurred at intervals, seldom longer than two or three weeks. In March, 1849, he was placed under the care of Dr. —, of Castlebellingham, who had him leeches frequently behind the ears, and gave him at first aperient, and subsequently tonic, remedies. This course of treatment having been tried for six months, without any benefit, he was then removed to Belfast, where he consulted another physician, who ordered sea-bathing and shower-baths, which were persevered in for half a year without the least improvement. In January, 1850, he was advised to come to Dundrum, near Dublin, when Mr. White gave him a fourth of a grain of iodide of silver three times a day, and established a perpetual blister on his scalp. After these remedies had been continued for five weeks, he got scarlet fever, for some months after which he remained free from his former ailment, and his parents flattered themselves that he was cured. In June, however, the epilepsy recurred as severely as ever, and, consequently, he again solicited Mr. White's advice, who, finding that the severity of the disease was unmitigated, consulted me on the 12th of July, the patient having experienced an unusually violent seizure on the preceding day. I advised the exhibition of the extract of cotyledon umbilicus in five-grain pills, three to be taken three times a day. These pills were continued for two months, when, as there had been no recurrence of the fits, we ordered him to have two pills three times a day, and at the end of two months, the fits not having re-appeared, we were enabled to diminish the dose to one pill; at the end of six months all medicine was discontinued, and he has continued ever since, a period of more than two years, quite free from the complaint. I should have men-

^a Communicated by Surgeon White, of Dundrum.

tioned, that there is nothing in this gentleman's appearance indicative either of plethora or debility.

CASE II.—*Frequently recurring Epilepsy in a boy of four years old, cured by Cotyledon umbilicus.*

This boy, of full habit and very nervous temperament, had been subject to epilepsy for more than a year, when I was consulted about his case by Mr. Pakenham, of Henry-street. The disease had latterly become much worse, the fits returning several times in the week, and often followed by excitement of an almost maniacal character. I prescribed a treatment directed against the tendency of blood to the head, and carefully attended to the state of the stomach and bowels, while great attention to diet, and removal from everything exciting, were strongly urged by me, and by the parents rigorously enforced. After some continuance of this general preparatory course, we had recourse to various anti-epileptic remedies, a succession of which was unavailingly tried for many months; and it was not until our patience had been worn out, and all hopes of a cure abandoned, that it occurred to me to try the extract of the cotyledon umbilicus. The good effects of this remedy were very striking, and after it had been persevered in for a few weeks, the child's health was perfectly restored. On one or two subsequent occasions a relapse took place, which was speedily cured by the cotyledon, and the boy has remained robust and free from all nervous symptoms for two years.

CASE III.—*Recent Epilepsy in a young man; Exhibition of Cotyledon umbilicus without any benefit.*

During the summer of 1851 the eldest son of a gentleman of rank was placed under my care. He was twenty-three years of age, and had been quite healthy until within a few months previously, when the epileptic seizures commenced, and, as usual, first attacked him when asleep. Since that time he has had a fit every three or four weeks, and but only once during the daylight. The short duration of the complaint previously

to his being submitted to treatment rendered me sanguine as to the beneficial effects likely to be produced by the cotyledon, and accordingly I commenced its exhibition with much confidence. I was, however, disappointed; for although the extract used had been carefully prepared, and the patient was most regular in taking the medicine, yet not the least advantage was gained. He at length became discontented, and had recourse to other advice, with what result I know not.

CASE IV.—*Epilepsy of long standing ; Partial relief from the use of the Cotyledon.*

A young woman, residing in Mitchelstown, had been for several years subject to epilepsy. The fit, as is frequently the case, recurred at nearly regular periods of seven weeks, and then the first and severest attack was succeeded, during the following five or six days, by three or four fits of less intensity.

This periodicity of epilepsy has been noted by many authors, but no one that I am aware has pointed out the important consequences to which it manifestly leads. A close attention to the effects produced by medicines in periodic cases has led me to the discovery of the following rule in practice.

The general and constitutional management of such patients must be persevered in at all times, and without reference to the periods; *but the specific treatment, i. e. the exhibition of remedies calculated to abate the violence of or avert the occurrence of the fits themselves, must be limited to the eight or ten days which precede that period.* If they are continued during the whole interval between the groups of fits, the constitution inevitably becomes accustomed to their influence, and when the time of need arrives they are powerless. On a former occasion I adduced proofs that this rule applies to the treatment of obstinate ague relapses with sulphate of quina.

But to return to the case in hand. The young person in question, having previously tried various medicines, took the

cotyledon according to my rule, and with the manifest good effect of delaying the next period at least four weeks, and diminishing the violence of the fits. Whether anything like a permanent cure would have been brought about by a steady perseverance, I am unable to say, as the patient's means did not enable her to procure more of the extract.

CASE V.—*Epilepsy, both in a regular and irregular form, occurring in a young man ; not relieved by Cotyledon.*

A youth of 18, with a strong hereditary tendency to scrofula, had a severe strumous affection of the knee six years before ; after the subsidence of which he enjoyed good health, until he had attained the age of 16. He was then attacked with an anomalous form of epilepsy, whose origin he traces to a vicious habit contracted at school. In addition to the ordinary convulsive fits, which usually came on at night, he is subject during the day to a singular nervous affection. This attacks him frequently when he is quietly sitting by the fire, and only lasts for a few seconds, during which he is unconscious, but seems to stare at those around him, and sometimes whirls himself about on his chair, or rises up and walks a few steps in a hurried manner ; at other times he raises his legs suddenly while he is seated, and sweeps them along the table. All the remedies of most character, and among them the cotyledon, were tried in vain in this case.

CASE VI.—*Epilepsy ; Failure of the Cotyledon.*

A girl, aged 13, is subject to occasional attacks of epilepsy at night, but they occur only at very distant periods. The most remarkable feature in her ailment is the derangement of the nervous system exhibited during the day, which consists in sudden but very transient fits of unconsciousness, which seize her three or four times while awake. If the fit comes on while she is walking, she generally stops, and appears to stare anxiously ; sometimes she walks on.

In this patient the cotyledon entirely failed.

In connexion with this form of epilepsy I may remark, that I have seen several patients in whom this transient unconsciousness formed the only symptom of disease discernible, and yet there could be no doubt that it was truly epileptic in its nature.

CASE VII.—*Epilepsy originating in loss of blood.*

A gentleman, aged 25, had always enjoyed good health, with the exception of occasional attacks of epistaxis. One of these being unusually violent, and not yielding to the ordinary treatment, the attending practitioner thought it prudent to use venesection. This stopped the bleeding from the nose, and matters assumed a most favourable appearance, when unluckily the bandage loosened during the night, and the patient awoke bathed in blood. Immediately after the bandage was secured he was attacked with convulsions, which returned several times within the next few days. Since that period this gentleman has been subject to violent attacks of regular epilepsy, which all treatment has failed to cure, though in the course of the fourteen years which have elapsed he has been under the care of various medical men, including myself.

This singular fact, for the accuracy of which I can vouch, is extremely instructive, proving not only that epilepsy may arise from causes producing debility, but that shocks to the system, imparted by causes acting only for a brief period and suddenly, may lay the foundations of long-continued disease. The connexion between uterine hemorrhage and convulsions is familiar to accoucheurs, and I had lately an opportunity of observing a patient in whom excessive loss of blood from the bowels was followed, after an interval of four days, by fatal convulsions. This case I saw in consultation with Dr. Harvey, and it is remarkable that although the lady was so weak that she had not ventured to leave her bed, yet an hour before the first paroxysm of convulsions she said that she felt better than at any time since her illness, neither had she complained at

all of vertigo, tinnitus, or headach! *So that there was really nothing to warn the practitioner of the coming danger*.*

In this patient Dr. Harvey very justly attributed the hemorrhage to over-anxiety of mind arising from the illness of her sister, a cause by no means improbable, for most medical men have witnessed instances of bleeding from various organs produced by affections of the mind. The following example is so remarkable that I must seize this opportunity of recording it. Many years ago, Surgeon Corr consulted Dr. Stokes and me respecting a dangerous spitting of blood in a relation of his own. It appeared that, nine years before, this young man had been seized with hemoptysis, in consequence of the operation of some of the usual causes of this affection. The day of the attack happened to be his birthday, and each successive birthday for the nine following years was disastrously marked by the recurrence of the spitting of blood!! After recovering from each attack, he remained free until his following birthday. The tenth was followed by rapid consumption.

CASE VIII.—*Epilepsy from Grief.*

Dr. Harvey has communicated to me the following very interesting particulars which occurred in a patient of his:—A

* [While this article was going through the press a case occurred in our practice strongly corroborative of the views here propounded as to the effect of fright suddenly giving rise to epilepsy. It was that of a young lady who had for years laboured under an aggravated form of flatulent gastralgia, and whom Dr. Graves had frequently seen in consultation with us. On the evening of Friday, August 27th, she was sitting with her mother at the window, talking cheerfully, having been rather better during that day than for some days previously; a small cannon was suddenly fired off close to her ear by some boys in play; she immediately screamed aloud and fell down in an epileptic fit, from this she recovered, and had a pretty tranquil night. In the morning the same boys discharged the cannon close to her bed-room window, when the epileptic fit again seized her with the usual preceding shriek. From this time until her death, which took place on the following Monday morning at 8 o'clock, the fits recurred all but incessantly, there being only a few hours' freedom from them on Saturday and on Sunday morning, when she was perfectly sensible.—ED.]

young gentleman at a boarding-school lost his brother, who died rather suddenly. This event gave rise to intense grief, which occasioned convulsions, occurring so frequently that the boy was obliged to leave the school. It was soon found that regular epilepsy had been developed, and in a severe form. Various remedies were exhibited in vain for several months, when it was judged expedient to try the effects of oil of turpentine. After it had been used for a few days it unexpectedly acted as a *vermifuge*, and expelled a tapeworm, from which time the epilepsy never re-appeared ! Here, then, we have an instructive example, proving that a source of irritation may exist without producing sympathetic disease, but yet capable of keeping up nervous symptoms when the latter have been caused by other agencies !

In conclusion I may remark, that the preceding cases illustrate some questions connected with the pathology and treatment of epilepsy, and likewise prove that in the Cotyledon umbilicus we possess a remedy capable of materially aiding our curative efforts in certain varieties of the disease. In derangements of the nervous system there are so many shades of intensity, and so numerous are the differences of cause which produce groups of symptoms, apparently but not really identical, that it is in vain to look for very definite or constant modes of treatment, and we must therefore seek for remedies, numerous as are these differences. We already possess medicines of great power in the treatment of epilepsy, but not one which does not frequently fail ; and consequently the addition to this list of a new substance is a valuable acquisition. It may be well to add, that in Ireland the cotyledon has been long known as a popular remedy, not only for epilepsy, but for asthma.