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ETHERIZATION IN DELIRIUM TREMENS.

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As the anæsthetic properties of chloroform and sulphuric ether, or a combination of the two, have been extensively tested in surgical and obstetrical practice, it is a matter of some interest and importance to know whether these articles may not be advantageously employed as therapeutic agents in the cure of certain diseases of the nervous system, which have hitherto baffled the skill of the physician, or at least have caused him a great amount of care and solicitude. Delirium tremens may be ranked among the neuroses, the symptoms of the disease indicating disturbance of the nervous system merely; hence the trembling, watchfulness, terror, and general nervous excitement, which form the peculiar characteristics of the malady. To relieve these symptoms by inducing sleep, is always the first and prominent care of the physician. No matter what remedies may be employed, whether alcoholic stimulants, narcotics or revulsives, to induce sleep is the chief end in them all. And why? A depression of the nervous forces consequent upon the reaction following excessive stimulation, being the cause of the distressing symptoms, it is evident that a restoration of the suspended nervous energy will palliate them, and cure the evil; and when sleep is induced, and not till then, is there a hope of recovery.

As it is not necessary that the sleep should be of that artificial character produced by opiates, the physician should be careful not to push the remedy so far as to induce narcotism; for here he may have a second disease, from which it may be impossible for the system to re-act. Sleep, as nearly allied to the natural condition as possible, is the most desirable. If this may be induced by merely checking the insomnia for a time, by a nervous stimulant, and allowing the system to steady itself long enough to fall into a natural slumber, we have certainly gained a great point in the treatment of a troublesome disease; and we may on the other hand by avoiding the use of brandy, or other alcoholic drinks, in the treatment, avoid exciting the patient's fondness for stimulants, and allow him to recover with a loathing of spirituous liquors, and with a hope of permanent restoration. Again, it is a point of some moment to avoid any medicine, the free use of which (as opium) will be followed by a re-action that may require remedies for its relief. Whe-

ther etherization will do all for the patient that is desirable, is yet to be ascertained.

A brief history of a case in which a mixture of chloroform and sulphuric ether was successfully employed, after the very free use of narcotics and stimulants, may prove interesting.—J. C., aged 35, recently had an attack of delirium tremens; he is of sanguine nervous temperament, and very easily influenced by alcoholic stimulants; he had abstained from their use for a year, but being absent from home, and meeting with an old friend, was induced to drink a glass of ale; he felt headache soon after, and “drank more to relieve it.” He then took brandy, and soon became intoxicated. He remained in this state several days, was brought home much disturbed in mind, and shut himself in his room, hoping to sleep and be better. His wife gave him freely of laudanum, but he could not rest, the wakefulness continued, and with it came the harassing fears and illusions, so pathognomonic of the disease. On the second day of the attack I was called to see him, and was informed by his wife that he was a “hard patient to manage,” that his former physician had often said that he found it more difficult to put him to sleep than any patient he had ever seen. Opium was the remedy uniformly employed, and he had been accustomed to very large quantities. After evacuating the bowels thoroughly, I gave it to him freely in the form of laudanum, black drop, and sulphate of morphia, at different times, but without effect. For forty-eight hours he took largely of some preparation of the drug, at intervals of an hour or an hour and a half, and drank freely of camphor water, and aromatic spirits of ammonia. He positively refused taking brandy or any of the ordinary alcoholic beverages, and his family strongly objected; hence the resort to the nervous stimulants before named, as substitutes. Finding the remedies which were employed altogether inefficient, being afraid to urge the opiates any farther, and the patient and his friends being unwilling to use any of the alcoholic preparations, on account of the fear of reviving the appetite for them, I felt myself warranted in trying the effect of sulphuric ether, and sought the advice of my friend, Dr. Trimble, upon the subject. He was unprepared to recommend its employment, having had no experience in its use. I, however, determined to give it a trial, and invited the doctor to witness its effect on the patient. We visited him together, and applied a sponge wet with the sulphuric ether to his nostrils; at first he resisted it with some violence, saying that it was an invention to kill him; by the exercise of perseverance and firmness, however, he soon yielded, and became fond of it, grasping the sponge convulsively, so that it required considerable effort to remove it from his hand. He became somewhat calmed, but did not sleep; his eyes were kept open, and presented an unnatural appearance; he would occasionally start upon his feet, and struggle with some imagined foe. At times he would cry out, and beg us not to kill him; it was this fear of being killed that haunted him through his sickness, so that he would rush from his room, and hide himself in other parts of the house, and among his neighbors. No restraint was imposed upon him, it being deemed suffi-

cient to have him constantly in the presence of an attendant, who guarded him from harming himself or others.

The ether did not put him to sleep, though it was continued for four hours at short intervals, during which time about two ounces were consumed. Failing to produce the desired effect, a glass inhaler, containing a sponge saturated with ether and chloroform (half an ounce of ether and forty drops of chloroform) in combination, was applied to the mouth, and in less than fifteen minutes the patient fell back upon his pillow, in a sound slumber, which continued without interruption for six hours, when he awoke and expressed himself quite well. He had not the slightest return of delirium afterwards, and convalesced rapidly. While under the ethereal influence, his pulse varied considerably; during the first hour or two, while inhaling the ether, it became somewhat accelerated and smaller, but when brought completely under the effect of the remedy, it moderated, and was nearly natural as to frequency after waking, though quite feeble from long watchfulness and excitement.

The writer is aware that it is unsafe to conclude, from the history of one case alone, that the same course of treatment may be safely pursued in every case of delirium tremens; but the character of the disease, and its obstinate persistence, in many cases, notwithstanding the free use of opium and stimulants, may afford good reason for adopting the plan which proved so successful in the instance just cited.—*New Jersey Medical Reporter*.

SKETCHES OF MEDICAL MEN AND MATTERS AT THE SOUTH.

[It always gives us pleasure to lay before the readers of the Journal, authentic information respecting our professional brethren, and the scientific and charitable institutions, in various portions of our country. We have been favored with many communications of this kind, from physicians residing in different places. Much that is interesting to others, in certain places, is often overlooked by a resident, but readily seen and reported by a transient visitor, who is also free to speak of personal character and reputation. As a good specimen of travelling sketches we therefore copy, with some omissions, from the American Journal of Insanity, the following letter from New Orleans—it being one of a series written on a tour from Utica, N. Y., to the South and West during the last spring.]

After visiting many places of interest at Washington, such as the Senate and House of Representatives, the Supreme Court, the Congressional Library, Patent Office, and calling on the heads of departments, attending a levee at the President's, and several parties, which differed, however, in no respect from those in large towns elsewhere, except in Washington they are rather more crowded—we left the 3d March, passing through Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama, and arrived at New Orleans the 16th of March. There are two State Lunatic Asylums in Virginia, one at Williamsburg, and one at Staunton,