collateral branches. An attentive perusal of the preceding cases, and the state of the blood in different points of the veins, can leave no doubt upon this subject.

The six cases related may appear insufficient to confirm the pathological doctrines advanced in this paper, if there were not many others of a similar nature : I should, therefore, mention, that the above are selected from twenty similar cases, two thirds of which I have omitted, either because they were deficient in important facts, or were merely a repetition of the others. In cases III. and IV. no particular appearances were found in the veins of one of the limbs, which was nevertheless very œdematous : here the infiltration was secondary, and of that kind which almost always takes place towards the fatal termination of chronic maladies, in consequence of a languid circulation of blood.

II.

DEATH FROM DIGITALIS AND VENESECTION.

By S. B. SMITH, M.D., Surgeon, U. States Army.

SCIENCE loses an interesting portion of the labor of physicians, because records of the salutary influence of medicines only, are extensively promulgated ; whilst the generous, but unavailing efforts to arrest destruction, criminal ignorance or neglect of duty, and above all, the baneful tendencies of known or experimental remedies, are, for the most part, sedulously concealed.

Acting upon a different principle, I record the painful fact, of a man's having been sent, by my agency, to his last account, before his allotted time ! This is no paradox ; he was destroyed at once, by the means intended for his benefit.

Our profession regards ordinary instances of dissolution as unpleasant inconveniences, which are soon forgotten : but when death is hastened by visible means, impressions never to be forgotten are made upon the actors in the scene. In the case about to be related, these impressions were heavy upon me, and although the time is long since past, they are still green in my recollection. From observations made upon the destroying agent, since the period alluded to, I am inclined to believe that this lamentable curtailment of life was attributable, as much to the peculiar state of the sufferer, as to the positive quality of the poison. The facts which induced such a belief, are given, and the attention of practitioners invited to them. Their experience will confirm or reject my speculation. In either case the cause of humanity will be subserved.

W. Stillwell, a fifer in Major Thomas Biddle's company of artillery, stationed at Fort Mifflin, Pennsylvania, aged 20 years, returned from furlough on the 17th March, 1817, and on the 19th, he was brought to the hospital, the most finished object of debauchery I had ever seen in one so young. His face was preternaturally enlarged ; his cheeks, mottled with "whilks, and knobs, and purple fire," were protruded beyond the nose, which partook largely of the disgusting rosa of the cheeks. His eyes were dull and blood-stained, and a reddish-colored serum oozed from the corners of his purple bloated lips. In truth, he stood upon the verge of chemical decomposition. To these were added, irritable stomach, shiverings, yellow skin, swollen ankles, difficulty of breathing, incessant cough, pain in the chest, and confusion of intellect.

Two intentions were here to be answered; the first was to allay irritation, and the second to remove an obviously diseased state of the liver. The first was accomplished by warm baths, rest, opiates, and diet; and the latter by a protracted course of purgation, followed by gentle salivation. It required a hundred days and upwards to restore this loathsome mass to that state of health necessary to the discharge of duty. As has already been seen, this man was prone to beastly intemperance, and he would incur every privation, and indeed corporeal punishment, to indulge in the use of ardent spirits. With a view to avoid observation, and to drink undisturbed, he pretended business in Philadelphia, and as there was much music in the garrison, he was permitted to be absent eleven days, toward the close of July. It was evident, at his return, that he had spent his time in exclusive dissipation. On the 5th of August, he was reported sick with the "horrors" of the soldier. This means, deadly sickness of stomach, constant retchings, and universal shivering. To counteract these, he was ordered a warm bath, free opiates, and brandy toddy. On the 6th and 7th, his cough was without intermission. There was great difficulty of breathing, and considerable pain in the chest; the pulse was so confused as to resemble a convulsion. With too little reflection, I prescribed three grains of digitalis, to be divided into four equal parts, all of which were given in the course of the day. In the evening, soon after taking the last dose, he was reported to be very ill. I found him in deep coma, with dilated pupil, stertorous breathing, a rapid, weak, intermitting pulse, and occasionally convulsed.

He was instantly bled, and after taking opium, camphor, and ammonia, he was placed in a warm bath. The blood drawn was almost black, but after an interval of two hours, as the adverse symptoms still continued, he was again bled and placed in a warm bath. The pulse suddenly sunk, and after a few short spasms, he expired, thirteen hours after taking the first dose. A careful examination of the body too truly informed me how the sudden death was accomplished. The energy of the brain and heart, or sensorial power, had been completely overwhelmed in a few hours by the activity of a poison unnecessarily administered. Although no part of the body could be said to be absolutely free from disorder, yet there were no appearances that could warrant so disastrous a termination. The internal head alone gave decisive proof of great morbid action. The brain and membranes were loaded with purple black blood, which was obviously the cause of coma, and possibly of the convulsions; of the latter, however, reasonable doubts must exist until a sufficient number of dissections shall determine whether this state of the encephalon always follows the over use of narcotics. Death from this class of medicines is always preceded by coma and spasms; but these latter take place so soon after their exhibition, as almost to exclude the belief of their being secondaries. This patient had no symptom of brain disease on the morning of the day of his decease, and the steward who gave him his medicine informed me that he had no complaint until after taking the third dose, when he had sickness of stomach and dizziness, and said that he could not see distinctly. Had this been reported to me, this

poor inebriate might have been spared a little longer, perhaps, to repent of his evil ways. His irritable pulse, languid absorbents, cough, and anhelation, were merely so many expressions of nervous exhaustion, which proper diet, quietude, and opiates, would have removed in time, had I only permitted my usual perceptions to have operated in his favor.

In the seven succeeding years, I employed digitalis several times in diseases which originated from, or which have been aggravated by intemperance. It uniformly induced some unpleasant effects, and was necessarily abandoned for less dangerous remedies. I was compelled to admit, that this violent medicine was particularly obnoxious to that state of nervous irritability and exhaustion consequent on long protracted intemperance, and that it should be cautiously employed with a drunken soldiery. It was not, however, until the close of the year 1824, that I became fully satisfied that the practice with such a class of men was to be abandoned. In the summer of that year, almost every individual in the garrison and vicinity of Fort Mifflin was afflicted with some form of bilious disease, and many of them were of malignant character. An unusual number of chronic diseases followed, and among those in garrison were eight cases of dropsical effusions from congestions. Five were ascites, two hydrothorax, and one in which both forms were combined. All these patients were intemperate, save one (a woman), which rendered their treatment tedious and embarrassing. I used the digitalis in every case, but it proved decidedly hostile to all but the woman, who had ascites. Combined with cremor tartar and iron, it cured her in a

surprising manner; but as often as it was attempted in either of the other cases, symptoms obnoxious to safety occurred. Two of the men were absolute drunkards, and the digitalis exerted an influence particularly pernicious to both;—such as cold sweats, virtiginous whirls, dilated pupil, and sunken pulse. One of them died, and his exit was certainly hastened by its use. The others were intemperate, although not strictly drunkards, and with them I persevered in its use; but nervous tremors and cold debilitating sweats admonished me that I was driving them to death. I have a patient now with ascites, from enlarged viscera, of long standing, caused by bilious fever of a southern climate, and aggravated by intemperance. I have three times given him the fox-glove in light doses, combined with aromatic infusion, but loss of appetite, night sweats, and diarrhoea, invariably followed its adoption. I have another soldier with strumous pulmonary inflammation, who has abused his constitution with the use of ardent spirits; in him also the digitalis caused vertigo, cold sweats, and diarrhoea, although prescribed with great caution, and combined with opiates.

Our profession is one of distress, and requires an uncommon philosophy, or a brutal insensibility, to sustain the perpetual demand made upon our sympathies; but no part of my practice has been more irritating and perplexing, than patiently to wait upon the mixed disorders which are based upon rum. The weakness of humanity is here in its last state of degradation, and while we anathematize the destroying cause, we are unable to abandon the victim. A double misery is pressed upon us as men, and the

profession is rebuked because of its insufficiency to restore an exhausted constitution ! It is hard that day by day and night after night we are compelled to "alleviate the pain inseparable from existence, and to soothe the sorrows allied to humanity,"—but it is absolute cruelty, when we know that these pains and these sorrows are inflicted by profligate vice. I have labored with unceasing assiduity to fix upon some means by which to counteract the desolating powers of ardent spirits, but can find none. The accursed "hair of the same dog" must be given to the violator of reason, of honor, and morality, until death removes him from our sight.

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III.

CASE OF MALIGNANT PHAGEDENIC ULCER.

By AMOS POLLARD, M.D., N. York.

I WAS called on the 8th of August, 1829, to attend Mrs. M—, whom I found suffering from an inveterate ulcer on the right leg, anteriorly midway, and extending deep between the bones. Likewise two of a more superficial character ; one situated on the middle and outward part of the right thigh ; the other on the gluteus-maximus muscle of the same side. She complained of excruciating pain at intervals, principally in the foot and ankle, attended with some degree of lameness. The ulcer on the leg, (which was about the size of a dollar,) presented a ragged edge, was partly filled with a dark-colored, striated, putrid mass, from which a black sanious matter was continually discharging. The other sores presented a different appearance ; were each of the size of the palm of the

hand ; the skin ulcerating in fistulous holes, surrounded by a dark purplish areola, and appeared fast extending. Mrs. M. is an English woman, of a good habit of body, and has borne ten children. She was attacked with inflammation and swelling of the leg, which terminated in this species of ulceration, only two weeks after her last confinement, eleven years ago, during all which time (except a very short interval), the ulceration of the leg has existed ; frequently changing its location, healing in one place, and appearing in another. The leg, on the outer and back part, presented the appearance of one continued cicatrix. The fleshy bellies of the gastrocnemii muscles were greatly diminished. The ulcers on the thigh and hip were only of about six months' standing. She states, in her history of the case, that she was treated in the first instance with blisters applied directly to the inflammation and swelling, which, however, did not prevent suppuration ; and from thence may be dated the origin of the ulceration. She had been attended at different times, by several eminent surgeons of Dublin and elsewhere ; who appear, nevertheless (by her statement), to have pursued a *pro-re-nata* treatment, for the most part, of emollient poultices and detergent washes and ointments. However, the ulceration progressed, as above stated, till her voyage to this city operated a change in her constitution, and the ulcer healed. It remained sound, however, a very short time, when the ulceration again commenced with increased violence, and extended to those other parts above mentioned.

My treatment of this case was very simple, consisting internally of the ordinary decoction of sarsa-