

CASES AND REMARKS

ILLUSTRATING THE EFFICACY OF
ALKALINE SALTS

IN ALLAYING

GASTRIC IRRITATION.

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To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Should you conceive the following illustrations of the beneficial use of certain *alkaline salts* will, at the present juncture, be interesting to your readers, I beg to place them at your disposal. The following sketch of three cases that have occurred in my practice within the last week, are only so far detailed as to establish the fact I have in view. Your most obedient servant,

PAUL SLADE KNIGHT.

Connaught Terrace, May 29th, 1832.

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CASE I.

The first case was developed in a hale lady, remarkable for health and activity, aged 84. She was attacked shortly after dinner, on the evening of the 15th inst., first with faintness, and then with sickness, an excruciating pain and spasm of the stomach, and copious vomiting of all the ingesta, and then of a semi-transparent fluid, (serum and mucus mixed?) so as to excite the astonishment of herself and the bystanders, as they could not possibly conceive whence it could all come. The bowels were actively moved, but not with much pain, nor could I learn anything satisfactory as to the quality. I found her in bed; pulse weak, but sufficiently distinct, and about 80; this was two hours after the attack. She had taken some brandy and water, but it immediately returned. She had cramp in the legs, which yielded to friction with a warm hand, but her chief complaint was of a general and intolerable uneasiness, with extreme thirst, probably from the more fluid parts of the blood being greatly exhausted, for the spasm of the stomach and the vomiting were at the moment subsided, though her feelings led her to apprehend a return. I immediately gave her the following draught and pill.

R Carbon. sodæ ʒj;
Tinct. card. comp. ʒi;
Aqua ʒxi, M. f. haust.

R Opii pur. gr. j;
Subm. hydr. gr. iij;
Conf. rosæ q. s. ft. pil.

And to take carbon. sodæ ʒj, carbon. an. gr. iv, every two, three, or four hours, ac-

cording as she should be awake, or affected with sickness or spasm.

16. She passed a good night on the whole; neither the sickness nor spasms had returned, and the thirst gradually abated; and with the aid of a mild aperient of pulv. rhæi she recovered.

CASE II.

On the 18th I was requested to see the lady's maid in the same house, a young, delicate, and ailing woman, about eighteen years old. On entering the street door I heard her piteous moans, although she was in bed in the attic. I found her suffering from extreme pain and spasms of the stomach, and in the right side, and cramps of the lower extremities, with a small pulse at 120; countenance very much sunken. When she had first complained of being ill, two grains of ant. tart. were given to her; and afterwards, when spasm of the stomach came on, the tin vessel, used on such occasions, was applied unremittingly, filled with hot water. She had vomited a large quantity of fluid, which I was told contained bile, as also did the stools, one of which was remaining, and which was of the usual cholera character, being in quantity from a quart to three pints, of semi-transparent fluid serum, with a large quantity of opaque white flakes at the bottom, of boiled rice and water appearance. I believe there was no bile whatever, nor were there any feces. To take immediately.

Tinct. opii ʒss;

Lavend. f. ʒi;

Sodæ carb. ʒi;

Aq. menth. p. q. f. ʒiiss. M. ft. haust.

R Sodæ carb. ʒj;

Pulv. arom. gr. iv. M. ft. pulv.

2da. q. q. hora sumend.

She retained the draught, and the spasm left her in half an hour, and never returned. She continued the alkaline salt three days, when all cholera symptoms having remained absent, other urgent ailments were attended to.

CASE III.

On the 20th instant, at four in the morning, I was called to Mrs. —, aged about 50, a strong active woman. She had been attacked at eight o'clock the preceding night with violent cramp, pains in the stomach, and vomiting, to which, in a much less degree, she had been subject, and for which she took, during the night, seventy drops of tincture of opium, and hot brandy and water, neither of which afforded relief. I found her in bed on her left side, very much bent, and her head nearly resting on her bosom, shivering with cold, though hot bottles and hot flannels had been applied to

her stomach, and her limbs had been rubbed; her countenance was very much sunken, and, as well as her hands, were of a pale, dirty, or dark hue, but not blue; her pulse was very weak, though sufficiently distinct to be counted at about 80; tongue pale and flabby, and she complained much of its sticking to her mouth, but it did not occur to me to ascertain its temperature; that of the limbs was icy cold, and they were also moist, much colder than I have witnessed in some fatal cholera cases. She spoke in a whisper, although, if she exerted herself, she could speak louder and more distinctly, yet her aspect was healthy. She had vomited an immense quantity of fluid, so as to astonish her and the attendant, about three pints of which remained in the basin, and exactly resembled that of No. 1. The bowels had been only moved once, though great pain had been experienced in them. I wished to place her more comfortably in bed, but she declined, dreading that any motion would bring on the cramps.

Treatment.—Hot bottles to the stomach, and friction with the hottest flannels to the limbs.

R *Sodæ carb.* ʒj;
Pulv. arom. gr. iv, statim sumend.

This remained, and in half an hour I repeated the dose; and in another half hour I had the satisfaction to see that reaction had commenced. I then left her with directions to take a similar powder every hour. About two hours after I had left her, finding she remained free from sickness, she took some tea, which she soon brought up; after that she refrained, and confined herself to water, as I had directed, and she never had a return of vomiting, or of spasm, or of pain of the stomach or side.

At two a.m., I found her on her right side, free from all pain, looking cheerful; eyes bright and face flushed; pulse 80, and firm; body and limbs warm; and she complained of heat in the spinal canal. Twenty ounces of blood were taken with four cupping-glasses placed at equal distances on the vertebral column, the blood was florid, and firm, and inflamed, exhibiting very little serum.

R *Sodæ carbon.*;
Potassæ carb. a. a. ʒiiss;
Spt. æth. f. ʒss;
• *Aq. menth. p. hss. M. ft. cap. cochl. j.*
ampl. 3â q. q. horâ.

On examining the state of the blood, however, I directed the mixture to be taken only two or three times a day, and thus the cure ended in convalescence; and in two days she walked round one of the squares; but says she has an indescribably unpleasant

feeling, and that *her veins look blacker than usual.*

Here, Sir, we have three cases, all attended by some of the most serious precursory symptoms of cholera asphyxia, all suffering excruciating pains from cramps in the stomach and limbs, accompanied by violent vomiting, and a great discharge of fluids, &c., and one case fast verging to a state of absolute collapse, and all *instantly* relieved by ʒi doses of carb. sodæ, and by the same medicine, restored from all the cholera symptoms. The same thing has occurred in the practice of some of my medical friends in this neighbourhood, to whom, as a member of the Paddington Board of Health, I took the liberty to explain my views some time last winter; the pages too, Sir, of your Journal, bear ample evidence to the same fact—that is, the extraordinary power of the carbon. sodæ to allay *gastric irritation*, in which, I believe there is sufficient evidence to show, chiefly consists the main secret of curing this, as well as many other diseases of a febrile and spasmodic character, as I have, in a former communication, explained. Who but must attribute the success of the practice in the Cold-bath Fields prison to this principle, affected wholly by the alkaline salts there used, and I doubt not that ʒi doses of the carbon. sodæ given every one, two, three, or four hours, according to the urgency of the symptoms, with such additions of stimulants or opiates as the peculiarity of the case might indicate, would have answered fully as well—much better than the formula used. We are, I fear, Sir, too little acquainted with the chemical changes effected in the stomach of man, under the million of circumstances that influence its actions, to justify us in adopting theoretical views, involving nice and ill-understood distinctions. An acid of a peculiarly virulent quality seems the basis of all the mischief in cholera asphyxia, as I had surmised in a published letter this time last year, and ʒi doses of the carbonate of soda, is its appropriate and speedy remedy, as I also stated in the same letter. This method of cure has the advantage of the greatest simplicity, and may be safely trusted in the hands of any intelligent person, to be used the instant any spasm of the stomach comes on, and repeated every hour till the attendance of a medical person can be obtained, which, of course, in a case of this nature, will be with the least possible delay. Is it too much now to say that thousands would have been rescued from a premature death and horrible tortures, had the views which I published in *The Times* paper of June 21, 1831, been duly appreciated?

(See note at the end of this Number.)