EPIDEMIC TRAUMATIC TETANUS.

BY I. E. THOMPSON, M.D., MISSOURI.

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DURING the months of March, April, May and June, 1853, this disease raged to a fearful extent in this portion of Missouri. It walked forth, garbed with terror, to the destruction of nearly all that became its victims. The first case that came under my notice was on the 10th of March. I was summoned in great haste to the residence of Col. Charles Sumpter, a pioneer of Missouri, and found his youngest son, a lad of 15, prostrated with well-marked symptoms of traumatic tetanus. The masseter and other masticatory muscles were greatly contracted—jaws firmly closed—growing worse. In fifteen minutes after I arrived, severe spasms came on, returning every five minutes, combined with opisthotonos. I ordered sulphate of morphine one third of a grain, and quinine two thirds of a grain, every fifteen minutes. 10 o'clock, A.M.—Have given seven grains of morphine and quinine, but patient growing worse; pulse 112; skin warm. I then gave an infusion of tobacco, but to no purpose; deglutition difficult. Ordered a teaspoonful of spirits of turpentine every fifteen minutes, and caustic potash along the whole track of the spine. 12 o'clock, A.M.—Pulse 114, thready; spasms worse. I found, upon examination, that the spasms had extended to the respiratory muscles, and to the heart; the treatment which before had been successful in my hands, now failed; friends greatly excited, and parents crying, "Doctor, can't you save my dear Johnny!" Circumstances threw me upon my "wit's end," thinking what to do; and at 15 minutes past 12, death relieved the sufferer, just *three hours* from the attack! I mounted my horse and sighed—retreat! retreat!

Upon learning the history prior to the attack, I found the lad had been ploughing the day previous, hearty and well as usual; did not complain through the night, but slept well. Ate a hearty breakfast, and went to ploughing again; shortly after arriving at his place of labor, the father, being near by, observed him sitting down, and calling to him, wished to know if he was sick; but receiving no reply, hastened to him, and found him speechless. He immediately conveyed him home, and sent for me, one mile off. I examined the patient well, and could find no marks of injury—not even a scratch. I contended he *had* received some injury, but the patient and family vowed not.

On the 20th of March I was called again to the same family. The next elder son was attacked in a similar manner. I pursued the same course of treatment as in the former case, till it became very evident that the patient *must* die, unless the treatment was changed. Fortunately I had with me a vial of camphorated chloroform, of which I immediately gave twenty drops internally, and saturated portions of cotton with it and placed upon the patient's upper lip. They were repeated during the spasms. In ten minutes after the inhalations, the pulse sank from 114 to 70; all muscular excitement ceased, and in twenty minutes the patient experienced refreshing sleep. The spasms did not return, and the patient gradually recovered. There were no marks of injury in this case visible.

During these four months I attended some forty cases, twenty-six of them fatal ; and but two cases out of that number showed marks of injury. One of these was a wound on the left foot, near the great-toe joint, of a little girl, aged 5 years, caused by letting a fork fall from her hand while washing dishes ; the other, caused by running a thorn into the sole of the right foot of a little boy, aged 10 years. The latter proved fatal in six hours after the injury.

In the patients that came under my care, the tetanic symptoms were usually acute, and ensued in the following order, viz., trismus, cramp in the muscles of the face, back and neck, with opisthotonos ; and those proving fatal, in the respiratory muscles and the heart. Not a single death occurred from loss of power in the brain, or spinal cord, or from exhaustion. It is passing strange that the treatment by opiates, &c., invariably aggravated the general symptoms, instead of producing convalescence. In every case, all other antidotes except chloroform failed. One of my neighboring practitioners stated that he used chloroform in combination with tinct. opii, and afterwards gave them separately ; the former producing relaxation, while the latter rather aggravated the paroxysms, proving satisfactorily that chloroform was the only reliable remedy. Old practitioners of good standing have told me that the treatment which failed in the present cases was never before known to fail in tetanus, in all its types, in the same section of Missouri ; and that it arose from wounds or local injuries. It is my firm conviction that if chloroform had been given on the first appearance of tetanus, most of the above cases might have been saved, young children and weak constitutions excepted.

The tetanus which has been epidemic here the past season, exhibited the following peculiarities :—First, generally arising from *no* wounds or local cause ; second, being confined to the muscles of the upper extremities, no lower down than the heart ; third, after the third day, prognosis being favorable, *no* deaths after that time ; fourth, opisthotonos in all cases, and general fatality ; fifth, being confined to the young alone, the oldest being 18 years, and from that to 10 months ; sixth, being confined to a locality of about five miles square. The situation of this five miles square is low, black-oak, swampy land, which the farmers have been compelled to ditch, in order to make it tillable. There was not a single case on dry elevated land. There have been no cases since the last of June.

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ALCOHOL IN MEDICINE.

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MESSRS. EDITORS,—In your Journal of March 29th, in answer to a series of questions proposed by himself, Dr. Gilman has endeavored to prove that alcoholic liquors are not indispensably necessary in the practice of medicine, and his zeal against this article seems to have led him to discard the use of stimulants altogether. As a specimen of his rea-