A CASE
OF
TRISMUS,
FOLLOWING
A CONTUSED WOUND OF THE HEAD.

By J. HARKNESS, Esq.

SURGEON OF RATCLIFFE.

Read March 30, 1808.

THE following case presenting some peculiarities, which may perhaps be deemed worthy the attention of the Medical and Chirurgical Society, I take the liberty of offering it to their consideration.

Samuel Joyce, a labourer in the West India Docks, received a contused wound on the head with a can-hook, when at work in the hold of a ship on the 27th January last. The wound, which was pretty long, was on the right side of the os frontis, and was cured in about a fortnight, without surgical assistance. About the 20th February, (which was ten days after the healing of the wound) he felt a little stiffness in his jaw, which gradually

increased so much, as to make him unable to get more than a small knife into his mouth. At the same time he felt a stiffness or weight in the eyelids, which prevented him from being able to open them readily; and a slight degree of dimness and a want of power over the ball of the eye, which remained to his sensations fixed in his head, and was slightly drawn inwards. The eyelids were for three or four days much swelled. The nose also became somewhat swelled and stiff; and over the whole body, but particularly the loins and pelvis, he had a sensation of stiffness and weariness, such as occurs on taking cold. He was able to work till the 25th, when he applied for my advice, and during that period he was only able to take, as nourishment, milk or any other fluid substance. The symptoms were then nearly as I have described them; but in addition, he began to feel a general stiffness and hardness over almost all his body, but particularly the neck, back, and abdomen, the latter being extremely tense and unyielding. There was in general no dyspnoea, but there were occasional catchings in the breath. For some time, there was considerable difficulty in swallowing, but deglutition was never wholly impeded. He could move his head, but on raising him, the only joint which seemed to be capable of acting, was the hip, and he was lifted as a heavy unyielding mass. He sometimes felt a kind of twitching in the back, and he spoke with labour. His pulse was about 80, and extremely hard, like

a piece of whipcord. His body had been open till within a day or two. On the first day, I ordered him a powder composed of five grains of calomel, five of scammony, and 25 of jalap, and directed that 3ss of Tinct. opii should be given every four hours.

On the following day I saw him with Mr. Thomas Blizard, Surgeon to the London Hospital, who attended him with me during the whole course of the disease. We determined upon a very liberal use of tincture of opium, together with the employment of a considerable quantity of calomel, conjoined with scammony, colocynth, gamboge or jalap, and at the same time recommended the patient to take largely of wine and porter:

From the 25th February to the 18th March, he averaged daily ʒi of tincture of opium given in divided doses, and that without any effect upon the sensorium, or the production of pain of the head, acceleration of pulse, or disposition to sleep. The quantity taken in the day was sometimes as much as ʒiss, and sometimes as little as 3v, but in 16 of the 23 days here mentioned, he took precisely ʒi per diem.

We were not able to act sufficiently upon his bowels till the third day from the commencement of our plan, when he had taken nearly ʒii of calomel, ʒxii of jalap, and 3xv of scammony, and

had besides two purgative glysters administered, nor could we, without the use of large quantities of drastic purges, keep up their action in an adequate degree. In the nine following days, he averaged in the day 40 grains of calomel, 51 grains of extract of colocynth, and 38 of gamboge; and as his mouth then became affected, the calomel was omitted. In the nine succeeding days, he averaged 80 grains of colocynth and 40 of gamboge.

During the whole period from the commencement of this plan till the 20th of March, he averaged rather more than two bottles of wine and six pints of porter in the day.

Under this mode of treatment symptoms of amendment soon began to shew themselves, inso-much that in three or four days from the commencement, he was able to open his mouth tolerably well, and to take his purgative in the form of pill. The tension of the muscles of the neck, back, and abdomen, gave way very gradually. That of the abdomen was the last symptom which went off, and when it had slightly abated, the omission of the purgative always created an increase of it. Two or three dark-coloured, but loose, feculent, and foetid stools, were procured in the course of the day. The affection of the mouth did not take place till the general symptoms were much abated; but we thought it right,

in order to ensure, as far as we could, his recovery, to continue the plan as long as any of the symptoms continued, and then only to relinquish it gradually.

At this time he remains weak, but has been entirely free from his complaint for some days past. From the 18th instant we have been gradually diminishing the tincture of opium, the purgatives, the wine, and the porter.

March 29, 1808.

The following TABLE exhibits the daily amount of each remedy.

T A B L E.

		Tinct. Opil.	Calom.	Jalap.	Ext. Col.	Gam- boge.	Scam.	Wine.	Porter.
		dr.	gr.	dr.	gr.	gr.	gr.	Bottles.	Pints.
Feb.	26	8	25	$2\frac{1}{2}$			15	3	
—	27	8	32	4				3	2
—	28	12	48	6				3	6
—	29	5	20	1				3	5
March	1	6	35		36	20		3	7
—	2	7	35		45	35		2	1
—	3	8	40		40	40		1	3
—	4	10	50		48	50		1	3
—	5	8	40		48	40		2	8
—	6	8	40		48	40		2	8
—	7	8	40		48	40		2	8
—	8	8	40		48	40		2	8
—	9	8	40		48	40		2	7
—	10	8			80	40		2	6
—	11	8			80	40		2	7
—	12	8			80	40		2	7
—	13	8			80	40		2	8
—	14	8			80	40		2	8
—	15	8			80	40		2	8
—	16	8			80	40		2	8
—	17	8			80	40		2	8
—	18	8			80	40		2	8
—	19	4			40	20		2	8
—	20	4			40	20		$1\frac{1}{2}$	9
—	21	4			40	20		$1\frac{1}{2}$	10
—	22	4			40	20		$1\frac{1}{2}$	10
—	23	4			40	20		$1\frac{1}{2}$	10
—	24	8			40	20		1	10

The patient, whose case is above related, had no

return of his complaint. His improvement was steady and permanent.

A case of a similar kind was treated, some time since, in nearly a similar way, by Sir William Blizard and Mr. Parkinson, Jun. of Hoxton. Mr. Parkinson has been so good as to draw it up at my request, for the Society.

JOHN HARKNESS.

61, *Broad Street, Ratcliffe,*
April 22, 1811.