

EPILEPTIC CATALEPSY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—May I request that you will have the kindness to insert this brief history of the following extraordinary case in an early Number of your valuable Periodical; it has excited much curiosity in the neighbourhood, from the fact of its having existed for the last thirteen months:—

On the 3rd instant I was induced to visit Anna Davies, aged 21, of Hendrewilyon, about five miles from Newcastle Emlyn, from having seen an account of her in a Welsh magazine, called the "Star of Gomer," when I found her in a state of perfect insensibility and unconsciousness, with her mouth widely open, which gave her a very awful appearance, and could not be closed by any means that I tried; her eyes were open, and generally fixed, although they were occasionally everted; her hands, which were clenched together, were lying on the chest; and every joint in the body was quite stiff, and a finger even could not be moved. The only muscle that I could excite to action was the orbicularis palpebrarum, which acted slightly on touching it. I pricked her in various parts of the body with a pin, which excited no movement whatever, nor any indication of pain. The pupils acted slightly; and on introducing my finger down the throat, I was able to bring a slight flush to the countenance and tears from the eyes; the pulse were languid, and about 50 in the minute, and respiration perceptible only by carefully observing the chest; the heat of the body was rather below the average standard. On inquiry I was informed that she remains in this state for twenty-three hours, and awakes regularly at or about nine o'clock at night.

In order to corroborate this statement, I again saw her on the 7th, and arrived at the house at 8 P.M., and took my seat at the foot of the bed with pencil and paper in hand, in order to note every particular. At this time she was precisely as described above, when, as near nine o'clock as possible, I was startled on observing her flung convulsively forwards into a sitting position; her hands were instantly loosened, and her arms thrown forcibly about, particularly the right, which was extended upwards at least fifty times; the spine was moved in a serpentine manner; the jaw was partially closed, and again opened; in fact, every muscle in the body seemed violently convulsed. After remaining in this struggle (as it were for life) for about five or six minutes, she again fell on her pillow in the same state that she was in before she was convulsed; the mouth being open, and all the joints stiff, &c. However, in about three minutes I observed her muscles becoming

relaxed, and the mouth seemed to be closing. An attendant was desired to raise her to a sitting posture, which was no sooner done than she became immediately sensible; she was rather affected on seeing strangers about her bed, which caused her to weep. However, I soon persuaded her to enter into conversation, which she did most freely; she asked for a little spirits and water, which was given her; she also took some biscuit and tea, with a little meat, and made rather a hearty meal. I was informed that the only pain she experiences is a sensation like a ball in the chest (the globus hystericus) when the fit is about returning; she also complained of general soreness of the muscles. She positively affirms that she is entirely deprived of the use of all her senses during the time she is in the fit; although she is becoming childish in her observations, still she immediately recognised me from having seen me once only about two years ago. After rather more than an hour's conversation, she pointed towards her chest, gave me her hand, and wished us all good night, and again she became violently convulsed, all her movements corresponding with those with which she was first attacked, and lasted for about three minutes, when she fell on the pillow to close the scene for twenty-three hours.

In concluding, allow me to inform you that she was subject to epileptic fits for three years before the present state of things came on, for which she was attended by several practitioners in this neighbourhood. She now obstinately refuses every thing in the shape of medicine, and occasionally will not take any food whatever for seven or ten days; and up to the date of my last visit she had been six weeks without a motion, and does not pass water every night.

I shall again report the case when any change takes place, and remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES THOMAS, M.R.C.S.L.
Newcastle Emlyn, Dec. 14, 1840.

TRANSFUSION AFTER UTERINE HÆMORRHAGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In reference to the case of transfusion after uterine hæmorrhage, published in THE LANCET, Sept. 5, "A Surgeon, Weymouth," asks two questions:—

1. "Why, when the foetus was expelled, and the placenta supposed to be partially attached to the 'posterior labium of the os uteri,' and 'partially extruded,' was its expulsion left to the powers of nature for thirteen hours, such serious hæmorrhage having already taken place?"

Could "the Surgeon" have read my statement? The foetus was expelled at 2 A.M.,

Aug. 19th, and the placenta at 3 P.M., 20th, being thirty-seven hours instead of thirteen. Does he consider that the use of cold, the plug, and stimulants, are an abandonment of the case to the powers of nature? I beg to refer him to my letter, "the hæmorrhage was arrested, and the collapse extreme;" under these circumstances I deemed manual interference to be highly dangerous, and desperately rash and ill-advised. Note the result, "the placenta was expelled without further hæmorrhage."

2. "Is it not the duty of the practitioner, when hæmorrhage does take place, and adhesion of the placenta is known or supposed to exist, to assist nature by its removal?"

I recommend "the Surgeon" to consult the various authorities on this point, and especially the sound precepts of the experienced and judicious, the graphic and eloquent Blundell, "a meddlesome midwifery is bad. Beware,—to disturb the clots by manual operation may be death."

The *Surgeon* marks the word successful by inverted commas; he aims, but strikes not. I did not use it in my communication, it was thus headed by the editor; nevertheless, I venture to assert it to be, as regards transfusion, most successful and triumphant.

Should the *Surgeon* be disposed to offer further queries or observations, perhaps he will favour us also with his name, of which I trust he is not ashamed. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

GEORGE MAY.

Reading, Dec. 15, 1840.

INCREASE OF SMALL-POX.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Upon referring to the tables of mortality, I find that the number of deaths, from small-pox, in the metropolis, is still increasing; and still no efficient measures are adopted for carrying out the Vaccination Act.

The number of deaths from this disease, according to the last table, is 66; and supposing that 1 in 4 of those attacked with small-pox die, which used to be the calculation 30 or 40 years ago, we may conclude that 264 new cases occur weekly. As, however, in the present advanced state of medical science, the proportion of deaths is probably much less, it is likely that this calculation is much under the mark. The average length of illness in cases of small-pox is, I believe, nearly a month; but supposing it only twenty days, we shall find that there are at present in the metropolis 5280 cases of small-pox; and, according to Mr. Farr's calculation,* this number will keep on increasing for two or three months longer.

* See his letter in THE LANCET.

What, then, are the inhabitants of London thinking about, that they allow the parish authorities to neglect the means of putting a stop to such a plague? Are they waiting to see if they can, by their neglect, drive out of town every respectable family which has not some urgent tie to bind it to the metropolis? Are the shopkeepers at the West-end of the town waiting till they see their shops crammed with goods and deserted by customers? When the loss of a single individual by such a state of things would probably amount to much more than the expense of vaccinating a whole parish. Are they aware that for half the expense of burying those who die of small-pox, vaccination might be made almost universal?

It is true that some of the parish authorities have engaged medical men to attend at certain stations to vaccinate those who apply to them; but it is equally certain that this will answer little purpose. The town did not want for stations for vaccinating before the passing of the Vaccination Act; but the poor are so careless and indifferent, that they will not avail themselves of these facilities. If it be considered desirable, not only for the poor, but for all persons, that vaccination should be made general, and small-pox thereby rendered extinct, persons must be employed to search out the poor and vaccinate all who will permit it. I have no doubt that in this way 19 out of 20 of the population might soon be vaccinated.

Trusting, Sir, that the inhabitants of the metropolis will take this matter into their serious consideration, and for the sake of their own interest, if not for the cause of humanity, take efficient measures to put a stop to the present epidemic, I remain your most obedient servant,

JOSEPH CURTIS.

Camden-town, Dec. 12, 1840.

THE EXTENSION OF VACCINATION ACT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—You, doubtless, remember the occasion on which Æsop represents one of his characters as exclaiming, "Oh! my sons, behold the power of unity." The medical men about Brentford have nobly illustrated the truth of the sage's experiment; we, too, the medical officers of the *Edmonton Union*, have followed in their wake: see the result; here is the brief detail.

On the 29th of October, the board directed their medical officers to be written to, to ascertain whether they were willing to vaccinate in their several districts, according to the new Act, at 1s. 6d. per case. A meeting of six of the medical staff of seven took