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ON SOME OF THE USES OF BROMIDE OF POTASSIUM.

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AMONG the remedies which have within the past few years been brought to the notice of the medical profession, there is scarcely one which, in my hands, has so seldom disappointed me, and so uniformly been of service in those diseases to which it is applicable, as bromide of potassium. For a long time it was but little used in medicine, and chemists and photographers chiefly consumed the small amount produced. Its use in medicine was confined mainly to the treatment of scrofula and analogous diseases, for which iodine and its salt—iodide of potassium—were used, and with the exception of some of the later editions of the U. S. Dispensatory, no mention is made of its remedial powers, except in scrofula, bronchocoele and enlarged spleen. About the year 1850, the Medical Department of the U. S. Army issued to each general and post hospital one ounce of "brominium, with printed directions for preparing and administering Bibron's antidote to the poison of serpents." In 1854, Thielmann, a Russian physician, recommended it as an excellent anaphrodisiac remedy in satyriasis, in the frequent and painful erections during gonorrhoea, in spermatorrhoea, and in nymphomania. In 1860, Sir C. Locock, in the *London Medical Times and Gazette*, recommended the bromide as a remedy having considerable influence in those epileptiform affections having their origin in ovarian irritation, and in 1862, Dr. Wilks, of Guy's Hospital, in some clinical remarks, illustrated by cases, speaks highly though cautiously of the new remedy as one of decided value in the treatment of epilepsy occurring both in males and females, and states that he continues to use it in all new cases which come before him, believing it to be wise to adopt some such remedy in the first instance. In 1862, Dr. A. Garrod, in the *London Medical Times and Gazette*, after about nine years' extensive trial of the medicine, speaking of the comparative results with the iodide of potassium in certain syphilitic eruptions, thus sums up the result of his observations:—

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I. When pure (free from iodide of potassium) it did not give rise to any of the symptoms to which the name of iodism has been applied.

II. It produces no irritation of the mucous membrane of the nose and fauces—no coryza.

III. Some patients experience a peculiar sensation of dryness of the throat and neighboring parts.

IV. When given in large medicinal doses, sleepiness or drowsiness, and dull headache were occasionally noticed.

V. When administered in very large amounts, some loss of power was noticed in the lower extremities, which passed off when the medicine was discontinued.

VI. The therapeutic action was decidedly what may be termed alterative—that is, it relieved certain forms of chronic disease, as syphilitic skin affections.

VII. No marked action was observed on the skin or kidneys. Then he says, soon after these observations had been made, and Sir Charles Locock had made known its value in hysterical epilepsy and the nervous affections connected with uterine disturbance, he was led to make further trials of the remedy, and found that—

VIII. Bromide of potassium exerts a most powerful influence on the generative organs, lowering their function in a remarkable degree.

IX. It is a remedy possessing most valuable powers in diseases dependent upon, and accompanied by, excitement or over-action of the generative organs; and hence it may be given with advantage in nymphomania, priapism, certain forms of menorrhagia, especially that occurring at the climacteric period; as likewise in nervous convulsive diseases dependent on uterine irritation; and, lastly, in some ovarian tumors.

X. It appears to produce an anæsthetic condition of the larynx and pharynx; and hence has been usefully employed in examinations of and operations upon those parts.

In the London *Lancet* of May, 1864, bromide of potassium is recommended by Dr. Henry Behrend as a remedy worth trying in cases of loss of sleep, attended or caused by much mental excitement, and as especially adapted to those cases where opiates fail, or make worse instead of better.

In an article published in the *Dublin Quarterly Journal*, in 1864, by Dr. McDonnell, of the Jervis Street Hospital, the attention of the profession is again called to this remedy, and its efficacy substantiated, by numerous cases of epilepsy in *males* and *females* successfully treated; and reference is made to Dr. Brown-Séquard, Dr. C. Bland Radcliffe and Sir C. Locock, all of whom had previously used it extensively, and with a great degree of success.

Having thus given a partial historical *résumé* of the uses of bromide of potassium up to the present time, I propose to give the

results of my own experience in its use, in epilepsy, in spermatorrhœa, and as a sedative in certain nervous diseases; and first of its effects in epilepsy, illustrated by a few cases.

CASE I.—Miss B., of this city, employed on a sewing machine in a collar factory, applied to me in the summer of 1863. She had one fit each month, usually a day or two before the appearance of the menses, which were neither profuse nor attended with great pain. She was otherwise perfectly well, but the fits were increasing in severity, and she had once fallen in the street. It was then nearly a year since the first attack. I gave her at once a solution of the bromide of the following strength:—Potass. Bromid., ʒ i. ; aquæ, f ʒ viij. Dose, a teaspoonful after each meal. At the next menstrual period, when at work over her machine, she was seized with a sudden dizziness, but there was no convulsion and no loss of consciousness, and in a few moments she was able to resume her work. Encouraged by this effect of the medicine, I advised her to persevere in its use. She left the city shortly after, and I saw no more of her, but was told by an aunt of hers living here, that Miss B. continued to take the medicine for four months, that she had never had a fit since, and was about to be married—this was just a year after commencing the treatment.

CASE II.—Mrs. J., of Green Island, aged 48, of melancholy disposition, had never had any children; came under my care first in November, 1864, complaining of pain in the head, dizziness, "hot flushes," and various other symptoms, which sometimes attend upon that period known as the "turn of life." She was at times very despondent, and would shut herself up for days at a time, refusing to see any one. I prescribed such medicine as seemed appropriate to her condition, and which relieved her to some extent, when one evening I was sent for in haste to see her, and the messenger stated that she had had two fits in succession. Judging them to be probably hysterical, I carried over with me some fluid extract of valerian, but on arriving at the house, found that she had fallen suddenly, and without any warning—was greatly convulsed—in short, that I had to deal with epileptiform hysteria. Furthermore, I ascertained upon inquiry, that it was just the period in the month (six months having now elapsed since the last appearance of the menses) when she should have been unwell, had she been regular. I then commenced with the bromide, in the same doses as in Case I. She had twice afterwards, at intervals of about a fortnight, a light seizure—in bed at night; then for two months there was no recurrence of the fits. She then discontinued the medicine, and began to have fits again, not so severe as at first, but sometimes two or three in a week. I then urged her to persevere with the medicine, and increased the strength, giving of the bromide— ʒ ij. in water f ʒ viij. —a teaspoonful three times a day. This solution she took steadily for five months, and

never had a convulsion after the first dose; is now at this date in the best of health and spirits.

CASE III.—M. A. M., a stout, healthy-looking, intelligent Irish girl, 19 years of age, came to me from Williamstown, Mass., in June, 1866. Her mother, who came with her, stated that she began to menstruate at 14 years of age, and *always* at each period had one severe convulsion, usually falling when at her work, and was stupid and prostrated for the remainder of the day. In this case I used the solution of the same strength as in the last case, and in the same doses, and felt perfectly confident, from the pathology of the case, in assuring my patient that she would be cured. In her first letter, written after the next period, and when she had taken the medicine only three weeks, she says: "I had a light fit this time, and got over it very soon; I am much encouraged, and think I shall get well." In the second letter, she says: "I am certainly getting better. I had no fit, but felt dizzy for a few moments, and held on to the table. In a few moments I got over it. I shall go on taking the medicine. I have great faith I shall be cured, for surely I am better these two months." I heard no more from this patient until January, 1867, when she wrote that she "had no fits at all, thanks be to God." To this I would add respectfully, and with all reverence, thanks be to God, and Sir Charles Locock too, for it is to him that the unfortunate epileptics owe a debt of gratitude they can never discharge.

CASE IV.—E. S., of this city, clerk, aged 24, of good habits, but formerly used tobacco excessively; never contracted the habit of masturbation; since the age of 17 had severe epileptic fits, as often as once a fortnight, and at times twice a week; had frequently fallen in dangerous places, and had sometimes been severely injured. He bears upon his face the scars of wounds received in his falls, and was known to several of our physicians and to our police as a confirmed epileptic. In May, 1866, when engaged in hoisting goods, he was suddenly seized, and fell from the third story of the store to the pavement beneath, a distance of thirty feet, fracturing his right thigh and one or more ribs. For a day or two his recovery was doubtful, but he got well, and with a good leg too. During his convalescence, Dr. Charles Freiot, his attending physician, advised him to try bromide of potassium for the cure of his epilepsy. This was in June. He took it but a short time, but enough to see that it exerted a controlling power over the disease. Owing to his lack of means, being out of employment, and the expensiveness of the medicine, he discontinued it during the summer. In November last he commenced taking it again, buying a quarter of a pound at a time, and mixing it himself—one ounce of the salt to a half pint of water—a teaspoonful three times a day. From that time to this day he has not had the slightest epileptic seizure, and expresses himself as feeling well and in excellent spirits. He has not yet discontinued the remedy altogether.

I might relate other successful cases, but these are enough for the pages of your JOURNAL, and enough to convince the most skeptical that, in cases of epilepsy, not having their origin in organic disease of the brain or spinal marrow, its bony walls or its membranes, we have a remedy which should be faithfully tried, and which will, in a large proportion of cases, effect prompt and permanent cures. "*Post hoc ergo propter hoc*" is, I am aware, the argument which too often attaches to some new remedy; but this will, I think, stand the test, if administered in those cases to which it is applicable. It is not infallible by any means, nor is any remedy for any disease.

In a future number, I will relate some cases illustrating the power of bromide of potassium in spermatorrhœa, together with such conclusions as I have arrived at from its use during the past five years.

Troy, N. Y., May 27, 1867.

Reports of Medical Societies.

EXTRACTS FROM THE RECORDS OF THE BOSTON SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL IMPROVEMENT. BY CHARLES D. HOMANS, M.D., SECRETARY.

MARCH 25th.—*Large Cancerous Tumor in the Stomach, with severe Symptoms.*—The case occurred in the Home for Aged Men, under the care of Dr. C. D. HOMANS; the autopsy was made and the specimen shown by Dr. J. HOMANS, Jr.

The patient was a man, 75 years of age, who for several years had suffered from symptoms of dyspepsia, though never very severely; for the last year of his life a tumor had been perceptible just above and about the navel, and extending, when he was erect, nearly to the ribs above; it was firm, not tender, and immovable; the integument could not be moved over the tumor, which projected so as easily to be seen by the eye. He gradually lost flesh and strength, never vomited, was generally constipated, had never passed blood or anything like it, and had a good appetite up to the last, being able to walk about to within a few hours of his death, for which there was no special cause.

Autopsy.—There is to be seen, just behind and to the left side of the umbilicus, a tumor of the size of the closed fist.

Head not examined.

Thorax.—Universal old adhesions over both lungs; the apices of both upper lobes were solidified, and contained many small cretaceous masses. There was great œdema of both lungs. Heart normal.

Abdomen.—A scirrhus tumor, nearly globular in form, surrounds and occupies the lower four inches of the pyloric extremity of the stomach. It has infiltrated and attached to itself the anterior abdominal walls, even the skin being slightly attacked, over a space about three inches in extent. The walls of the tumor vary from half an inch to an inch in thickness; its mucous surface is deeply ulcerated. The morbid growth ceases abruptly at the pylorus. The remainder of the stomach is perfectly healthy. Under the microscope, the

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