

II.

CASE OF COLICA CONSTIPATA REMOVED BY INFLATION. BY JOHN KING, JUN., SURGEON.

THE importance of inflation as a remedy for obstruction of the bowels, appears to me not to be sufficiently appreciated at the present day. It was first recommended by Hippocrates for the removal of intestinal obstruction; in more modern times, it has been resorted to by Hoffman and Haller; and notwithstanding the neglect it has since experienced, I cannot but regard it as worthy of an eminent position in the list of therapeutic agents. The treatment usually prescribed in cases of ileus or colica (without inflammation) is very discordant, as witness,—warm baths, fomentations, injections of warm water and oil, rubefacients, and blisters,—contra—cold effusion and immersion, freezing lotions, pounded ice and snow; not to mention emetics, purgatives, and mechanical distention by warm fluids, quicksilver, gold and silver balls, &c.,—and when all these remedies have failed, bloodletting, tobacco, in infusion and smoke, and lastly, gastrotomy. Yet this simple means of inflation, although probably the most powerful, and the least dangerous, is entirely overlooked. It paralyses, as it were, the constricted fibres of the bowels, and may be used in the following cases, if not with complete success, at least with advantage, viz., the various kinds of colic proceeding from torpidity, spasmodic constriction, viscid mæconium in newborn infants, impaction, bezoards, and other intestinal concretions, volvulus or intus-susceptio, and some cases of hernia. It was a happy thought of those who hit upon this means in the hour

of danger, after all their other efforts had proved nugatory. For although tobacco, which is often used as a last resort, sometimes is successful, it is not uniformly so, and it too often happens that the patient, rather than undergo a repetition of it, beseeches to be allowed “to die in peace.” We may also observe the hesitation with which the practitioner has recourse to it, not only because of its doubtful efficacy, but on account of the danger there is of greater exhaustion being produced by it. I take the liberty of giving one case, as I conceive it may give some idea of the power of inflation.

In September, 1829, I was requested to visit Mrs. G., æt. 26, of rather delicate frame. On the night previous to my visit, she experienced an uneasy sensation in the region of the stomach, for which she took eight grains of calomel combined with a half-drachm of compound powder of jalap, without any impression on the bowels. During the night, this uneasiness increased to an almost intolerable pain, accompanied with obstinate vomiting, which continued till the evening, when I saw her. In the course of the day she took two doses of castor oil, and received five injections. When I entered the apartment, she was sitting near the fire, and her body bent forward; the face was wan, hollow, dejected, and of a dingy yellow color; the surface of body and extremities inclining to cold. Pulse 80, soft, and much compressed—tongue, at the back part, covered with a brownish-colored mucus—she had obtained no alvine solution for six days. She took no notice of my being present, or of anything going on around her, but informed me, when questioned as to the seat and

kind of pain, that it was of "a violent screwing nature, working between the stomach and navel,"—coming on in paroxysms, and ending in, or producing vomiting. I ordered the warm bath, and gave a teaspoonful of laudanum with compound spirit of lavender, which was soon afterwards vomited. Upon this, an effervescing mixture was given, then five drops of croton oil with some laudanum, and in about three quarters of an hour, five drops more without laudanum: but each in its turn was rejected, with a quantity of yellow-colored fluid. It was at this time I first thought of inflation. For this purpose I procured a pair of common bellows, and securing the bladder of a glyster bag to the nozzle of the bellows, the pipe was introduced into the rectum, while the patient lay on her right side, and the bellows was commenced being wrought. As soon as the air entered the rectum, the effect was immediate and satisfactory; the countenance lost its anxiety, the eye brightened, and the patient said she felt quite relieved. A gurgling noise was heard in the bowel, with an escape of fetid air; and in about a minute from the time the air began to enter the rectum, she requested to be allowed to go to stool. She had a copious defecation and a good night's rest; and next morning complained only of being much enfeebled, but was otherwise well.

I was deeply impressed, about five years ago, with the fatal result of a case of intus-susceptio, in a fine robust infant, six months old; which was supposed to proceed from the effects of half a teaspoonful of some syrup of poppy, made, as is commonly done, with opium, given for the purpose of procuring sleep during the period of teething.

About eight hours after it was given, the child began to cry vehemently, having appeared restless and uneasy for several hours previously. Early in the forenoon it passed a very scanty stool, streaked with blood; soon after this, vomiting commenced, which continued until the little sufferer sank. Is it unreasonable to imagine that if inflation had been used in this case, the result would have been otherwise? I was hereby shown the necessity of seeking more powerful means than fluid injections, &c. And I hope, as I firmly believe, that inflation with common air is the necessary desideratum. I conclude, with Dr. Cheyne, "that a man dying of ileus presents one of the most pitiable sights in nature; and a leading object of this paper is to remove a part of the horrors of the scene, by withholding many of the bitter doses which are forced upon him by the solicitude of his friends and the officiousness of his physician."

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III.

RUSPINI'S STYPTIC.

DR. A. T. THOMSON has announced the discovery of the composition of this nostrum, and we hope he may be found correct; for, unquestionably, the medicine is one of the most powerful restrainers of hemorrhage which we possess. Its price is enormous, and therefore its utility—indeed its use, is greatly curtailed. Without going into the process by which Dr. T. arrived at his conclusions, we may observe that he considers *Gallic Acid* as the active principle of this styptic. There are in it, he remarks, minute quantities of opium and sulphate of zinc, but they can have no operative