

number of years, they are insufficient to found definite conclusions upon, but may prove useful as suggesting points for future inquiry. They would have been, however, more conclusive than they are had the whole material of the London hospitals been available; but, unfortunately, owing to the absence of any uniform system of keeping the registers throughout the metropolitan hospitals, information given in some reports is not mentioned in others. It would be of immense value, especially in determining the etiology of disease, in points relating to their predisposing causes, if a uniform system of registration were adopted for all the metropolitan hospitals." (Trans. of Pathological Society, vol. xxx., p. 8.)

It is to this great want of *uniformity* that I desire especially to call attention. If such an influential body of men as the medical and surgical registrars of the London hospitals were to meet together and consider the subject, it would be possible for them to draw up such a system of registration as would include all the good points of the varied systems now in vogue, and one capable of universal adoption. It would be impossible, then, for any special committee to make such a statement as that to which allusion has been made, and which will remain for ever as a blot on the well-intended but ill-directed labours of the present system of registration.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

E. H. HOWLETT, F.R.C.S.,

Late Surgical Registrar to King's College Hospital.

June 28th, 1880.

"SLEEPING GIRLS."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Will you allow me space in which to refer to a case—"The Sleeping Girl of Turville"—about whom a communication from Mr. Hayman, of Stokenchurch, appeared in the pages of your journal of the 12th ult.

This girl, now twenty-one years of age, has, it appears, been lying on her side with her hand under her face, and without apparent adequate means of sustenance, since March, 1871. She was alive on the 15th of May last. She has been "visited by numerous medical men from all parts, and, I believe," says Mr. Hayman, "without any exception, with more or less scepticism,"—i.e., I apprehend, as to the one position having been maintained for so long a period, and her alleged "fasting"—not perhaps to be accepted in its *severest* sense.

Such cases have not been uncommon. I remember to have had one in every respect similar whilst at the Royal Free Hospital. The facts in relation to which might be of use if turned to account in the treatment of another such case.

The patient, a girl of about the same age as Mr. Hayman's patient, was from a village in Essex, where she had long been popularly known as the "sleeping beauty," and largely visited by persons from far and near, mostly moved by such various phases of emotion as the sense of the supernatural would awaken. There was no deception, actual or intended. The doctors, the clergy, even the village conjuror, had been tried, but without benefit; at last she was sent to one of the large London hospitals, but still in vain.

When she came to the hospital under my care she took the position in bed assumed by Mr. Hayman's patient—apparently asleep, with a subdued sigh and a gentle movement of the body on each inspiration, but still alive to a cup or spoon containing liquid food when applied to her lips. Of this she took but little, and of solid food, as far as I knew, none—showing on how small a quantity of sustenance the body can be kept alive. I do not remember whether the stomach-pump was used, but I think not; for a remedy soon occurred to my mind, and with the consent of the friends I lost no time in making trial of it.

I had a grain of tartar emetic placed on the back of the tongue. The girl began to show signs of awaking to the dismal consequences of the salt's activity. She soon sat up, and was persuaded to assuage her trouble by draughts of lukewarm water, and later to solace them by a little brandy as well. When these effects had subsided, she relapsed into her former condition, when, after an interval of twenty-four hours, another dose was administered, and was followed by like effects. She was much disgusted with the process, but after another period of

wakefulness she once more relapsed. A third dose was ordered, *in her hearing*, when she roused herself, and once and for all refused to submit. The remedy had done its work; the patient took food, got out of bed, began to move about the ward, and, with the terrors of the "third dose" before her mind, made such recovery that in the course of a very few days she packed up her boxes and started home.

The "sleeping beauty" was thus transformed into a useful handmaiden in her mother's cottage; and a few years ago, happening to be in the neighbourhood, and being reminded of the incident, I called, and found her a robust, active and intelligent young woman, still with a keen recollection of the occurrence I have related, not unmixed with gratitude.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

June 16th, 1880.

JOHN GAY.

HYDROPHOBIA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On the 25th of May a dog, supposed to be rabid, was seen in the neighbourhood. This animal bit the following persons to my own knowledge:—W. M., on the calf of the leg; Mary R., on the right ear and right thumb; D., on the left cheek; H., G., and F., on the forearm; E., on the hand; and, besides, five dogs and two oxen. The brute was followed up, shot, and subsequently buried. On the 27th the carcass was exhumed, and a post-mortem examination was made by a local veterinary surgeon, whose verdict was that the dog was not afflicted with rabies, and who asserted that his mysterious conduct was caused by some wool found in the stomach, which produced intense uneasiness.

All the wounds of the fore-mentioned were immediately washed out and cauterised with strong nitric acid, and poultices were applied, and one was also excised. With the following exception none of these cases have hitherto evinced hydrophobic symptoms.

On the 15th of this month I was asked to visit Mary R.—. I found her very restless and feverish. She had previously complained of giddiness and of a varying temperature, being at one time very hot and at another extremely chilly. I next saw her on the morning of the 16th, and immediately made my diagnosis as hydrophobia. The following symptoms characteristic of this disease tended towards confirming the above—viz.: (1) Frequent convulsive seizures caused by the least excitement; (2) acute sensibility of the general surface; (3) spasms of the respiratory muscles and of the muscles of deglutition.

I immediately placed the case under the care of a trained nurse, ordered the room to be darkened, and the bed to be surrounded with thick gauze curtains, so as to prevent any currents of air passing over the patient, and to exclude all rays of light, since both the above excited the convulsions. I also prescribed bromide of potassium and aromatic spirits of ammonia, with a view to lessening the acuteness of the paroxysms. She had an intense horror of fluids, and the simple act of pouring out a liquid for her in her hearing, or even mentioning the name of water, was sufficient to bring back the most violent convulsions.

About the thirty-sixth hour after the first appearance of the disease the symptoms gradually subsided, the acute sensibility disappearing entirely. She remained in this state till her death, which took place from exhaustion at 4 o'clock on the afternoon of the same day. What makes this case all the more curious is that, although she had previously entertained the most inveterate horror of all liquids, she asked for water about half an hour before she died.

Of the dogs, two were immediately shot, and the remaining three evinced very peculiar symptoms—one of them died after a day's indisposition, and the owners were prompted to destroy the other two.

Lastly, one of the oxen became mad, and was shot on the 22nd, and the conduct of the surviving one is so much out of the common that the owner is treating it with popular remedies for this disease.

In conclusion, I would ask, if the dog was not rabid, how can these symptoms be accounted for?

I remain, Sir, yours very faithfully,

J. HOPKIN DAVIES,

Surgeon to the Margam Copper Works.

Tir Caradoc, Taibach, June 26th, 1880.