

Can it be doubted that, in this case, the disease had been greatly exasperated by the mode of management? or that the subsequent kind of treatment greatly tended to promote his recovery? Surely the case requires no comment.

[To be continued.]

CASE OF POISONING WITH STRYCHNIA.

BY ALEXANDER SMITH, M.D., EDIN., FORFAR.

T— H—, a gamekeeper in the neighborhood, who had been missing from the 7th of May last, was found dead in a plantation on the 11th. A phial, labelled "strychnia, poison," and containing a small quantity of a whitish powder, was found lying by his side: which I took possession of. On my arrival at the spot, the body, which had not been moved, was lying on the face, with the hands firmly clenched, the feet very much extended, and the head considerably bent backwards. Every joint of the body was excessively rigid, and some of the muscles exhibited the same appearance as when in powerful action during life. There were no marks of violence, except a few superficial scratches on the eye-brows and tip of the nose, probably produced by the stems of the rough strong heather, among which the face rested. The countenance was very livid, and somewhat swollen. Except some shrinking of the eye-balls, and the usual opaque appearance of the corneæ, observable soon after death, there was little indication of putrefaction.

The body having been removed to a convenient place for further examination, the head was opened, and the bloodvessels on the surface of the brain found very highly congested. On cutting into the brain, the texture of which was healthy, numerous bloody points presented themselves. The choroid plexus was very turgid. On cutting the scalp, dark-colored fluid blood flowed freely from it. The blood manifested the same appearance throughout the body. The lungs were healthy in structure, but much gorged with blood, and the heart, which was also natural, had both ventricles very much distended. The stomach, which externally exhibited no trace of disease, and a portion of the duodenum, with their contents, were removed for more minute examination. All the other viscera of the abdomen were in a healthy condition. The spine was not examined. On opening the stomach a patch of the villous coat, near the cardiac extremity, presented considerable congestion, and a small quantity of a whitish powder adhered to the membrane at this part, and also at some others where no congestion was manifest. It contained no food, and only a few ounces of fluid, which exhaled a strong spirituous odor. A minute quantity of the contents was then mixed with very dilute sulphuric acid, and boiled in a glass vessel for about half an hour. A portion of the supernatant liquor, when cold, being treated with nitric acid, was changed to a light orange color, and another portion, upon adding solution of tannin, deposited a pretty copious grayish-white sediment. A small quantity of the powder found in the phial was treated in the same manner, and similar results produced.

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The detection of strychnia, so far as my information goes, is at present surrounded with great difficulty and uncertainty. On this account, and also from the fact of very few cases being on record where a thorough and scientific examination has been made by men of authority on the subject, I transmitted the stomach and remainder of its contents to Prof. Christison, who kindly undertook to inspect them, and has since furnished the following account of his examination:—

“The contents, and washings obtained with water acidulated with sulphuric acid, were filtered, treated with milk of lime, concentrated to a thin syrup, and filtered again. The insoluble lime-salts and excess of lime would contain strychnia, if there was any. The mixture, dried at 212° , was treated with boiling rectified spirit, and the solution was evaporated to dryness. The extract had the intense persistent bitter taste of strychnia, and was turned bright yellow by nitric acid. Another test mentioned in my Dispensatory did not act characteristically, the colors being altered by organic matter. There is, in fact, a want of positive tests for strychnia, when mixed with organic matters, unless the proportion were considerably greater than in this case, so as to admit of some complexity of chemical handling.

“I think there is satisfactory evidence for a case of suicide or accident. It may be doubted whether this chemical evidence, however, would be enough in a charge of murder—in which there was no proof of the nature of the symptoms.”—*Edinburgh Monthly Journal of Med. Science.*

ON A NEW AND SIMPLE METHOD FOR THE CURE OF FISTULA.

BY H. B. EVANS, ESQ., M.R.C.S., ETC.

THE frequent occurrence of fistula, and the often unfortunate and unsatisfactory results of an operation intended for its cure, induce me to make known to the profession, through the medium of *The Lancet*, a simple plan of treatment, which has proved eminently successful in two cases under my care.

In October, 1850, W. E——, box-maker, aged 42, applied to me with an abscess in the neighborhood of the rectum, pointing externally, which was opened, and gave exit to a large quantity of pus. This gradually degenerated into a deep fistulous tract along the rectum, and communicating with it at its extremity. For two months the usual remedies were adopted without success, and I then expressed my opinion that an operation must be resorted to. In this I was fully borne out by the opinion of an eminent hospital surgeon whom I called in. This the patient obstinately refused to submit to, and such refusal led to my adopting the mode of treatment I am about to detail.

A blunt-pointed silver probe, five inches in length (the sinus itself being four inches in depth), was inserted into the wound, having previously been dipped in dilute nitric acid (one part of acid to one part of water), and suffered to remain there a minute. That this had a strong cauterizing effect, I knew from the pain it occasioned. Thus far the result