

SEA-SICKNESS.

By HENRY NAYLOR, L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S. Edin.

HAVING read the papers of Messrs. Clapham and Rudd Leeson on the treatment of sea-sickness with nitrite of amyl and the benefit derived from it, I wish now to say what I think of the disease, or, more properly speaking, symptom. Some physicians believe it to be due to a disordered state of the liver, and recommend patients to go in for a course of saline aperients and other things for some little time before they start on a sea voyage; others think that it is caused by an overloaded stomach. But neither explanation is adequate, because the subjects often show no symptoms of a disordered liver, nor does the sickness cease when the stomach is emptied; in fact, in most cases it is very distressing when the stomach is quite empty. Others, again, suppose it to be due to a congested state of the brain and spinal cord.

The theory I propose may be called the cerebral anæmic theory. The rapid swinging of the vessel and the body with it irritates the eyes and vision, and this, by reflex action, produces a spasm of the cerebral capillaries; this explains the feeling of faintness and giddiness that comes on suddenly, just as the vessel gives a big swing. The sudden emptying of the cerebral vessels causes the stomach to sympathise, resulting in efforts of vomiting, whether the stomach be full or empty. These symptoms are most distressing when the subject is in a standing or sitting position, with the eyes open. If he lies down the change of position relieves the anæmia, the faintness and giddiness pass off, and the sickness ceases. But occasionally even the recumbent position does not give relief if the eyes are kept open. When they are shut the symptoms are not felt in the least. I have known this to be the case with several ladies who were never comfortable while at sea unless they were lying down with their eyes closed. They were able to eat meals and retain them if they lay down and closed their eyes immediately afterwards. In fact, I have been obliged to keep some constantly in bed to prevent their dying of starvation. A fact that helps to show the feasibility of the anæmic theory is that brandy and other stimulants give considerable relief for a time, which would not be the case if cerebral congestion had to do with sea-sickness. The explanation of how sea-sickness continues so persistently in some is that the sickness weakens the heart's action, and this keeps up the cerebral anæmia, and that in turn again produces the sickness; so that prolonged sea-sickness is due to a circuit of causes, the one producing the other—the visional irritation, cerebral anæmia, sickness, weak heart's action.

With reference to nitrite of amyl, Mr. Leeson says, if it is to do any good, it must do so at once. This is because the medicine, being an antispasmodic, relieves the spasm of the cerebral vessels, and thus the brain is refilled with blood. But if it fails, then the persistent sickness, by its effect on the contractions of the heart, prevents the brain from getting a sufficient supply of blood, and thus the brain becomes anæmic, not from a spasm of the capillaries, but from an insufficient power of the heart. It is at this stage that alcoholic stimulants, in small doses frequently repeated, give great relief.

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ABORTION; SEVERE FLOODING; INJECTION OF HOT WATER; RECOVERY.

By ARTHUR PERIGAL, M.D.

MRS. T—, aged twenty-eight, mother of six children, sent for me on Sept. 14th, 1878. On arrival I learned she had had a discharge during the two previous days, but, deeming it a return of her periods (which had been absent on two occasions), it did not distress her. However, that morning, while at the w.c., she suddenly felt a gush, and something pass from her. She was at once got to bed, where I found her lying on her back, pale, pulseless, and

moaning; only spoke when shouted at. The bedding was soaked with blood, dripping through to the floor. On examination, the vagina was dilated, the os uteri firm, but slightly patulous; blood was pouring from her in a continuous stream; no uterine contractions. I insinuated my finger through the os uteri, at the same time endeavouring to grasp the uterus in the left hand. I now found the uterus was enlarged, mobile, and contained something resembling a placenta in touch. A fluid drachm of tincture of ergot in brandy was at once given. As the bleeding in nowise diminished, I decided upon injecting hot water; so I passed the tube of a "Higginson" well into the uterus, and injected very slowly six times with water that I could put my hand in without great discomfort (a thermometer not being forthcoming). It seemed to answer well, as the bleeding greatly diminished. I now got my finger inside the os, and sweeping it round as far up as I could reach, I detached the placenta from several points; the bleeding now greatly diminished. A medical friend, who now arrived, helped me to repeat the hot water injection; after having done so, the os became soft and dilatable, so that I was able to insert two fingers, and extract the mass already referred to, which was the placenta. I thought I felt something else in the womb, but on withdrawing my finger, the os contracted so tightly that I could not reintroduce it. Dr. Livingston, who kindly assisted me, also tried to pass his finger, but failed; and as the bleeding had all but ceased, we decided to leave her alone—at least for the present. The dose of ergot was repeated, and teaspoonfuls of brandy and milk were given every ten minutes; pulse 50, very feeble. To have one ounce of strong beef-tea every half hour. After four hours she had rallied a little; no bleeding of any moment, no bagging of womb, no pain, no sickness; pulse 70, stronger; says she feels comfortable. From this time she progressed slowly, but surely, towards recovery; only a slight discharge during the three following days. To take ergot and aromatic sulphuric acid in chinchona. In ten days she was on the sofa, and was out in three weeks.

Remarks.—Patient is a pale, flabby woman; generally bleeds pretty smartly at her periods and confinements. When I saw her my first idea was to stay the hæmorrhage, and learning that something was supposed to have been passed, I thought the bleeding might be caused by the retention of the placenta, partially or wholly detached, in the latter case acting as a preventive to the due contraction of the womb. So when I found the os patulous, and looking at the rate she was bleeding, I decided not to plug, but at once to dilate the os and empty the uterus; moreover, the finger in its passage through the os would act as a plug. When I found the bleeding continued in spite of the finger being in the canal, and the os did not give much, I determined to use the hot water injection. This acted well, restraining the bleeding, and helping the os to dilate, so that I had not much difficulty in passing my finger and bringing away the placenta after the repetition of the injection; then the bleeding ceased. The ergot may have had something to do with this happy result; but I incline to give the hot water all the credit, as contraction ensued immediately after its application. Had there been iron in the injection I should have dreaded its entrance into the uterine sinuses, for during the injections the placenta was in utero; however, this may be no reason against its use in such a case. The course of the case showed that nothing was left in utero, as no clots or débris passed. Upon questioning her afterwards I learned that she had labour pains during the day previous; that she lost a quantity of blood during the night, but got up and went about the house in the morning; when at the water-closet she felt a great rush and hardly remembered more. Had assistance been procured the day previous in all probability her life would not have been in such jeopardy.

New Barnet.

DIPHTHERIA seems to be just now the bugbear of sanitary authorities and their officers. One of our contemporaries reports an outbreak at Lancaster-road, Lower Norwood, caused, it is reported, by an open sewer, which pours itself into the main drain in the immediate neighbourhood. Two fatal cases have occurred out of a total of eight, all within a radius of twenty yards of the sewer. It would be well if the inhabitants consulted their medical officer of health, or applied for assistance to the Local Government Board.