

a long abstinence from it, and if they find (as they assuredly will) that they can do all without which they formerly could with it, then I think the conviction will force itself upon them that they have hitherto been wasting what might have been turned to a better use than the consumption of the cereals in the shape of alcohol.

As I do not wish to occupy your space with unnecessary verbosity, I will content myself with observing, that alcohol alone of all other articles of diet fails to satisfy the appetite by consumption. There is a limit to the quantity of beef, bread, &c., as well as of jam tarts, which we can consume, and all the "standing up" in the world will not enable the eater to use more than a given quantity; but alcohol requires no standing up to enable the consumer to take more than is good for him.

Trusting that these remarks will induce Dr. Hooper to continue his subject (able as I know he is to do so), and that further investigation will induce him to remodel his views,

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Lancaster, Aug. 1861.

METCALFE JOHNSON, M.R.C.S.

## POISONING BY STRYCHNIA.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Several cases of poisoning by strychnia having occurred, and considering it advisable for every medical man to give the result of his experience deduced from actual observation, I forward the following case, in the hope that others who may feel inclined to adopt the same measures may meet with as successful results as I have—this being the third case that has occurred in my practice, and all having recovered under the same treatment.

I was sent for on the 22nd of January last, at half-past one P.M., by Mr. Yarrow, to see a person, and on my arrival I found a woman, aged twenty-eight, in the following state:—Lying on her back on the floor, quite sensible; arms and legs stretched out to their fullest extent; hands clenched; toes flexed; legs close together; body in a state of opisthotonos. Countenance livid and anxious; eyes starting from their sockets and fixed, pupils widely dilated, conjunctivæ highly injected; teeth firmly clenched. Breathing irregular, and at times almost ceasing; skin hot, bathed in perspiration, and steaming; pulse rapid and scarcely perceptible. The spasms relaxed at times, but did not entirely cease for one minute; and on the slightest touch of the body or legs, or on attempting to give her anything to drink, she would immediately cry out, "My legs! my legs! hold me! hold me!" and then utter a shriek. The head would then become drawn back, arms and legs extended, hands clenched, and the body in a state of opisthotonos; face and head a deep purple; foaming at the mouth; teeth clenched; eyes protruding and fixed; heart palpitating violently; and the breathing irregular, and as if drawn through a reed. No action of the bowels or bladder took place.

From the above symptoms there could be very little doubt entertained as to its being a case of poisoning by strychnia, but no information could be obtained from the friends who were present to throw any light on the subject. The patient, when asked if she had taken anything to destroy herself, shook her head.

Half an hour had elapsed since she had been discovered in the above condition before I saw her; and she was supposed to have been in this state about ten minutes, as near as the people in the house could judge, from the time they saw her in apparent health. As the stomach-pump was not at hand—and even if it had been I could not have used it, the teeth being so firmly clenched and all the muscles of the neck rigid—I administered chloroform, and after a few minutes had the satisfaction of seeing the violent convulsions become less severe; but on attempting to give her an emetic, the contact of the cup with the lips immediately brought on the convulsions as bad as ever. Under these circumstances I waited till she was again under the influence of chloroform, and then succeeded in passing a small funnel between the teeth, and by degrees got down two drachms of sulphate of zinc dissolved in a little water, repeating it every quarter of an hour until three doses had been taken, when vomiting took place, but not to much extent. The poison had been taken just before her usual dinner time, and on an empty stomach.

Mustard poultices were applied to the calves of the legs and soles of the feet, and along the whole course of the spine; and she was kept under the influence of chloroform for nearly three hours, its administration being discontinued at intervals only

to allow of the emetics being taken. The effect of this agent was most wonderful in arresting the frequency and allaying the violence of the convulsions; for when under its influence the violent spasms relaxed, the pulse became less frequent and more firm, and the countenance assumed a more natural hue; but as soon as its effects passed off, the convulsions returned as violently as before. In all, about from an ounce to an ounce and a quarter of chloroform was administered.

At five P.M., the spasms recurred about every five minutes, but were much less severe. Some strong coffee and brandy was now given, as she was very much exhausted, and a short time afterwards a large dose of camphor and opium.

At ten P.M., she had slept for about an hour; slight convulsions occasionally and startings of the body when touched. Some castor oil was now ordered, and milk and magnesia at intervals. For the next thirty-six hours she had some starting and twitching of the limbs, and on the third day was able to get up.

It was not till late in the evening I was enabled to get the information from her that she had quarreled with her husband, went out and bought some rat poison, and took it in as little water as possible. On inquiry at the chemist's where it was bought, I found it to consist of oatmeal, Armenian bole, and strychnia, about thirty per cent. of the latter. From the quantity of the powder taken, there could not have been less than two or three grains of strychnia.

This is the third case of poisoning by strychnia that has come under my notice, all occurring in females, and in all after their recovery from the poison I have had to attend them for some time for dyspepsia; and in one case the patient was subject to violent attacks of spasms in the stomach, occurring two or three times a week for two years. The patient in the above recorded case suffered from dyspepsia for some weeks after. This may have been quite independent of the strychnia; but coming on almost directly after, and continuing, would almost lead one to imagine it had its origin from that source, more especially as they had never suffered from dyspepsia before.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

City-road, August, 1861.

JOSIAH T. POWELL, L.R.C.P. ED.

## CONCEALED HÆMORRHAGE.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Will you find room for the insertion of the following case, which is interesting in itself, and illustrative of the appalling contingencies against which the anxious medical practitioner often has to contend; the result is also calculated to encourage the young practitioner:—

I was summoned to attend Mrs. M— late on Saturday night, the 13th of April last. She was in labour; but the pain was only abdominal, and did not cause any contraction of the uterus. On examination per vaginam the parts were found cool, soft, and well lubricated with mucus; the os uteri soft, widely dilated, and low down; the anterior fontanelle presenting. No alteration occurred after every abdominal pain; the parts remained as flaccid as before. My patient's condition was most unfavourable. She was suffering from emphysema of the lungs, and from heart disease, while an anæmic state prevailed. I gave stimulants with ergot, but with no effect. I then considered it advisable to rupture the membranes. Very little liquor amnii followed; but in some few minutes labour with its proper pains in the back came on, with uterine contraction and expulsive efforts. In half an hour the child was born, and was healthy; the placenta came away easily, and the uterus contracted thoroughly. I put on a bandage, and went down stairs for a short time. When I again went up stairs, to my great surprise I found my patient tossing her arms about, with deafness, and loss of sight; the pupils dilated; extremities cold; no pulse, and the second sound of the heart could not be heard; fifteen inspirations in the minute. The baby had been cast to the bottom of the bed. On feeling the abdomen, I found it as large as when the child was in utero; flooding was going on, and I diagnosed hæmorrhage proceeding within the uterus. I gave brandy and ergot, and introduced my hand within the uterus. I removed about a pound of coagulated blood. The uterus contracted, and, by means of stimulants in quantity and warmth, the pulse returned, together with the faculties of sight, hearing, and speech. After half an hour had elapsed, I went down stairs; but was again hastily summoned by the nurse about half an hour afterwards, who thought Mrs. M— was dying. I found her in the same state as before, and the uterus full of coagu-