

THE FARADIC CURRENT IN THE TREATMENT OF INSANITY.

We find reported in the *Annales Medico-Psychologiques* for November and December, 1891, two cases of insanity treated by means of the faradic current by M. Magalhaes Lomas, of Portugal. The apparatus used was that of Du-Bois Reymond, with the bi-chromate cell of Grenet.

The first case was one of melancholia in a man of forty-two years of age. The condition was produced by a violent moral shock. He tried to commit suicide by cutting his throat. After the suicidal attempt there was profound apathy, with aversion to food and extreme emaciation. The involuntary discharge of urine and feces was habitual. He also had during the course of the first few months a hæmatoma of the left ear, followed by recovery.

His medication was a general tonic one, but was without effect on his general mental state, and he remained entirely unimproved. His condition was that of dementia. At this stage treatment with the faradic current was instituted. The negative electrode was applied to the neck of the patient. The one hand of the operator was applied to the head of the patient, while the other held the positive electrode. This manner of administration was adopted in order to exactly and conveniently appreciate the intensity of the electricity.

The sésances lasted for from ten to twelve minutes. The faradization was sometimes cephalic and sometimes general, the current feeble. After one dozen days the amelioration was considerable, and the cure of the patient was established one month afterwards.

The second case, a laborer, æt. twenty-six years, inherited neurotic tendencies.

After a violent access of mania he passed into a condition of almost complete stupor, the same as in the preceding patient, and in time was considered a dement. His physical state was most miserable, and there was involuntary discharge of urine and feces habitually. The application of faradic electricity was followed by equally good results as in the first case.

The same treatment was being employed in a case of the mania of epilepsy, but at the time of the report rested without results.

Apéros of this line of thought is an interesting study on the use of electricity in mental disease by M. le Dr. Jules Morel, of Ghent, Belgium. His experiments were

made, we believe, with the galvanic and faradic currents. Dr. Morel concludes that it is precisely in the melancholias, and in the melancholia with stupor, that electrotherapy seems to be of the most efficacy. In mania, on the contrary, it gives but little success. In partial delirium it acts, above all, on certain symptomatic elements, such as hallucinations of hearing.

There is, he says, naturally but little to expect from this method in dementia and general paralysis.

In short, electricity can render important service in the treatment of "*des folies nerveuses*," but in these affections, as in other forms of mental disease, the morbid indications are not yet well established, and an empirical plan is necessary.

THE PUERPERIUM AS A FACTOR IN THE ÆTIOLOGY OF MULTIPLE NEURITIS AND DEGENERATIONS OF NERVE TISSUE.

H. Handford, M.D., in the British Medical Journal, Nov. 28, 1891, reports two cases of multiple neuritis, both probably of alcoholic origin, where the onset seemed most clearly to be determined by childbirth. He mentions a third case where the exact diagnosis was more difficult, but its onset immediately following confinement was equally clear. After quoting Gowers' suggestion in this connection that "the tissue health is lowered, and hence slighter causes excite neuritis," he says the rapid progress of *tabes dorsalis*, and the frequency of optic atrophy in it when sexual relations are actively maintained, has been frequently noted. The relation of child-bearing is probably of a similar nature, and it is not suggested as a sufficient cause *per se*. On the other hand, child-bearing is a common occurrence, and the neuritis may have been a coincidence, but multiple neuritis is a comparatively rare disease, and for three out of six or seven cases, in both sexes, to commence with childbirth seems an undue proportion. The author then asks, "is the influence of childbirth one of the factors which render alcoholic neuritis so much more common in women than in men, while drinking habits are more prevalent in the latter?"

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