

TREATMENT OF GOUT WITH CARBONIC-ACID GAS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In a work that I recently published, with the express object of recommending a particular remedy for the cure of that painful and intractable malady, gout, it was stated that, so far as my own experience went, the remedy in question, carbonic-acid gas, shortened the paroxysms, and lengthened the intervals of the attack to a greater extent than any other with which I was acquainted; that attacks which before had lasted two or three months, were reduced in the end, and after the lapse of some years, to as many weeks or days; while the disease itself, instead of returning twice, or three times every year, was only experienced every second, third, or fourth year. Two cases only were then given illustrative of the efficacy of the remedy: one showing the effect during a paroxysm, and the other its ultimate result. Although these cases were considered to be sufficient at the time for the object contemplated, I was in hopes that some of my professional brethren would, ere this, not only have given the remedy in question a fair and proper trial, but have also been induced to make the result of those trials public; for it was in this hope and expectation that I published the work in question. Being disappointed in this respect, however, and having received several private communications on the subject, I have selected the following case, thinking that the history of it would not be unacceptable to the readers of THE LANCET:—

The writer is an English gentleman, resident in Barcelona, who, having experienced an attack of gout last spring, wrote to me for directions respecting his own case, and subsequently for that, the history of which I am now about to relate. Although the same result has been obtained in both instances, I have not deemed it necessary to give the particulars of the former, in consequence of the case being a mild and recent one. After speaking of the satisfactory state of his own health, the writer thus continues:—"You must know, then, that your remedy appears to have effected a radical cure in the patient who has been under my charge since last June. It is such a striking case of the success of your treatment that it really deserves to be added to the work, and I regret very much that I am so little qualified to draw up a report for that object. I could, however, get something like a deposition from the patient, attested by respectable witnesses, if such a document could be of any service in making known the wonderful effect of carbonic acid gas.

"The person in question (a Spaniard) is about forty years of age, and has suffered very severely for about fifteen years, with

three or four attacks every year, of the most severe kind, the disease generally commencing in the hands or feet, and extending itself to the elbows, knees, shoulders, &c., and on one occasion to the testes. He describes the agonies he used to suffer as so great that he has frequently called on those about him to put an end to his existence. His fingers are distorted and crooked, and, in short, although it may be an improper remark on such a serious subject, he went by the nickname of 'commander of the gouty legion.'

"The draughts (effervescing) were given to him, in the first instance, at the onset of an attack in the right hand, brought on, as he supposed, by a fit of passion the preceding day. The inflammation subsequently reached the elbow, but went no further. He complained, however, of the pain this time being even greater, if possible, than he had suffered before, and being an ignorant man had got it into his head that it was owing to the disease not being able to spread as usual, by which all its malignity was concentrated in one spot. I made him take the draughts every three hours, supplying out of my own stock of French soda, not trusting to the Spanish, which, you know, is inferior. In three days he came round, the violence of the pain and inflammation having subsided, after which he only took the draughts three times a-day, until all symptoms of the attack had disappeared.

"After this he continued quite free from the disease for three months, when symptoms of another attack were felt; but, full of belief in the efficacy of the remedy, he passed the first or better part of the night in taking a draught every two hours, or even more frequently, till at last sleep overcame him, and when he awoke late in the morning every symptom had disappeared, and he found himself as if he had been dreaming and quite well. From that time down to the present day (now five months) he has had no signs whatever of the distemper."

It is right to state that, in addition to the effervescing draughts, I advised the patient as soon as the intensity of the attack had subsided, and the inflammation had partially disappeared, to take a few grains of blue-pill every other night, and an electuary composed of sulphur and magnesia in the morning. When the latter combination was not found sufficient, I ordered an aloetic preparation to be added to the blue-pill, so as to keep up a gentle action on the bowels. A slight aromatic tonic was taken for some weeks after the attack had entirely subsided. This, or some other plan of treatment, varying, of course, according to circumstances, will always be requisite in old and severe cases, for the administration of a remedy like carbonic-acid gas cannot of itself be sufficient to remove effects that have resulted from long and repeated attacks,—if, as I infer, this agent acts only by removing the

cause of the disease, the presence of a morbid matter in the system. In mild and recent attacks the removal of the cause will generally be sufficient to remedy the effects, but, in other instances, such a result cannot be expected. If, however, we have the means of removing the cause with skill and certainty, the task of remedying the effects will be, comparatively speaking, an easy one, except in those cases, but too frequent, alas! in which organic disease has resulted from long-continued attacks of the disease.

In closing these remarks I am bound to add that the result obtained in so old and intractable a case as that under consideration, appears to be greater than what I have myself experienced; and I am induced, therefore, to ascribe the difference to a circumstance that has been before dwelt upon by me, viz., that in Spain the type of most diseases is milder, and that the cases are less complicated than in this country;* not that I infer, with the reporter of the above case, that a radical cure has been effected, if, by "radical cure," he meant a *total* exemption from future attacks. This must be apparent from a slight consideration of the subject, for if the remedy in question acts only by removing the immediate not the remote cause of the disease, no matter what that cause is, whether external or internal, the individual must always be liable to be again brought under its injurious operation and so experience its effects to a greater or less extent the same as before the first attacks of the disease. If, however, the facts before mentioned are to be depended on, instead of the attacks continuing three or four months, and returning two or three times a-year, they will be in the end, and after the lapse of some years, reduced in duration to as many weeks or days, and only be experienced every second, third, or fourth year.

Trusting that the result of the treatment of the preceding case will be considered sufficiently conclusive to induce some of your numerous correspondents to give the remedy in question a fair trial, and, at the same time, to make the result of that trial public, I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

J. PARKIN.

Dover-street, March 29, 1843.

**MORTIFICATION AND ENTIRE
SEPARATION
OF THE
UTERUS, AFTER A LINGERING
LABOUR.
RECOVERY OF THE PATIENT.**

MR. DARVILL, at a late meeting of the Medical Society of London, related the following case:—He was called on Sunday

* Vide LANCET, May 12 and 19, 1838, on the State of Medicine in Spain.

night, December 15, 1839, to Mrs. B., aged thirty-seven, pregnant for the first time. He found a little, spare woman, with a depressed and anxious countenance, and a quick, small, and weak pulse. She complained of pain in the loins, and believed that labour had commenced. On examination this was found to be the case. He was sent for again on Tuesday, the 17th, and he then found the orifice of the uterus dilated to the size of a shilling. The pains were confined to the back, and very slight. She said that the child had kicked very strongly all day. On the 18th the os uteri was dilated to the size of a half-crown-piece, the parts were lax, and there was plenty of room in the pelvis: there was still, however, pain only in the back, and so slight as scarcely to be called pain. In other respects she continued the same. He had so unfavourable an opinion of her that he told her husband he was doubtful whether she would do well. On the 19th the os uteri was dilated to the size of a crown-piece, the pains slighter than yesterday; she complained of the child having moved very much in the night. The soft parts were moist and yielding. Four half-drachm doses of powdered ergot of rye, recent and good, were administered at intervals of half an hour, with a little brandy and water, but no pain was produced, all she felt being a little bearing down. On the evening of this day the head of the child was found to have entered the pelvis.

20. She was in the same condition without any pain. The labour having advanced after taking the ergot the previous day, though no pain was produced, she again took two half-drachm doses of ergot, at intervals of twenty minutes, followed by beef-tea and ammonia. The bladder being distended, about half a pint of urine was removed by the catheter. In the evening the head was on the floor of the pelvis: he proposed to deliver with the forceps, but the husband objected to it. He could with ease pass his finger round the head, between it and the pelvic bones, and the soft parts were lax, and neither tender nor hot.

21. Was called again at two o'clock this morning, and found her in every respect the same as over-night. He again proposed to deliver by forceps, but this was not consented to, and at ten o'clock the head was still on the floor of the pelvis, the scalp protruding; she complained of great drowsiness. He was still not allowed to deliver with forceps. At two o'clock she was still in the same state, but at six o'clock he found that the head had passed without her being aware of it. With some difficulty he passed his finger under the chin, and applied powerful traction. At this time Mr. Crisp, who had been sent for by Mr. Darvill, arrived, and it took them about half an hour to deliver the body of a very large child, quite putrid, the cuticle peeling off when touched, and the