

in their presence. She would, under these influences, knit marvelously and achieve prodigies of fancy work with her needle, and upon being interrogated by her mother would be entirely oblivious of such accomplishments during the prevalence of the automatic mental conditions described. Being a Catholic, she frequently went to confession and communion whilst subjected to these peculiar mental phases, and upon returning to her normal mental state, would most strenuously deny to her relatives any recollection of such actions, usually disavowing the possibility of their occurrence, without her full consciousness and remembrance thereof. Her general deportment, intelligence and coherence of conversation during the mental automatism were all that her most critical friends could desire; yet the oblivion of all actions, conversations and moods, whilst thus acting automatically was necessarily perfect and incontestable. Such were the developments which for years marked this young lady's life, and no one will consider them exaggerated who is at all familiar with the literature of the obscure, remarkable and protean manifestations of epileptic disease.

A case cited by Dr. Hammond, page 672, in his sixth edition, "Diseases of the Nervous System," occurring under his observation, and in which the mental automatism lasted eight days, will satisfy the doubts of the most incredulous upon this subject, as it is the most remarkable case on record and an undisputed fact. That Dr. Hammond is *facile princeps* the leading authority on this continent on all that is allied to Neurological Science, will be my apology for introducing it in this connection.

The patient, who was engaged in active business as a manufacturer, left his office at about 9 a. m., saying he was going to a florist's to purchase some bulbs. He remained absent eight days. He was tracked all over the city, but the detectives and friends were always an hour or more behind him. It was ascertained that he had been to theatres, to hotels where he slept, to shops where he had made purchases, and that he had made a journey of a hundred miles from New York, and, losing his ticket and not being able to give a satisfactory account of himself, was put off the train at a way-station. He had then returned to New York, passed the night at a hotel, and, on the eighth day, at about ten o'clock, made his appearance at his office.

He had no recollection of any event which had taken place after leaving his place of business, eight days previously, till he awoke on the morning after his return to the city, and found himself in a hotel at which he was a stranger. It was ascertained beyond question that in all this time his actions had been entirely correct to all appearance, that his speech was coherent; and that he had acted entirely in all respects as any man in the full possession of his mental faculties would have acted. He had drank

nothing but a glass of ale, which he took with some oysters at a restaurant.

I will not be accused of a digression in the clinical description of this case by the aforesaid references, as this history would not be complete without their citation. Then again, for those who (as regards its therapeutic management which is to follow) are incredulous concerning the *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, will at least be convinced that all the phenomena which had to be dealt with were purely of epileptic origin.

The patient had been treated most perseveringly by many eminent physicians, and was finally taken abroad in order that nothing would be left undone. She was there under distinguished professional care. In passing through this city, in October, 1874, her mother was induced to consult me by a mutual friend.

I must confess that I felt that, under the circumstances, it was almost useless to prescribe.

As a forlorn effort at simple palliation, I determined to utilize the recommendations of Dr. Kitchen, in a then recent article in the *American Journal of Insanity*. The article referred to is headed as follows: "Ergot in the treatment of Nervous Diseases," by Dan. H. Kitchen, M.D., Assistant Physician of the New York State Lunatic Asylum. He states, page 90, July Number, 1874:

"In epileptic headaches and in epilepsy we have used ergot largely."

"In *petit mal* there are muscular twitchings, congestions of the face, suffusion of the eyes, and a rush of blood to the head. We have in many of these cases been able to ward off the *grand-mal* by large doses of ergotine. We have often combined it with conium, and it seems in this combination to work even more satisfactorily than alone, which is chiefly due, we suppose, to the sedative effect of the conium."

We therefore placed the patient upon a formula almost identical with Dr. Brown Sequard's celebrated one for epilepsy, substituting the sodium for the potassium salt, in consequence of its less depressing effect and of its greater tolerance by the system, giving three times daily twenty grains of the former with a half drachm of Squibb's Fl. Ext. Ergot. She began the remedy in October, 1874, and took it *faithfully* for, a year and a half.

Her mother stated that at the four subsequent menstrual periods she had three severe epileptic seizures daily. They then disappeared entirely. Continued medicine, notwithstanding their cessation, for over eighteen months. The fits have never recurred since early in February, 1875, now three years and ten months.

Present condition—Her general health is excellent; she enjoys society, of which she is an ornament; her intelligence is far above the average; no vertigo; no nervous symptoms of any kind are present; no phenomena which might point to the presence of aborted epileptic par-