

voluntary movements excite the spasms usually produced by strychnia, even when they otherwise would not have made their appearance. In treating cases of poisoning by strychnine, it is therefore highly important to prohibit as much as possible all voluntary movements, and to avoid violent excitement of any other kind.—*Zeitschrift der K. K. Gesellschaft der Aerzte zu Wien*, March 12, 1860.

MEDICINE.

ON THE TREATMENT OF DELIRIUM TREMENS BY LARGE DOSES OF DIGITALIS.

By G. M. JONES, M.R.C.S. Lond. and Edin.; Surgeon to the Jersey General Hospital. Having just had an opportunity of showing to some Medical friends from London—Mr. Spencer Wells, Dr. Ballard, and Mr. McCrea—the effects of large doses of digitalis in the treatment of a very severe case of delirium tremens; and having been strongly advised by them to make my experience of this mode of treatment, known to the Profession, I gladly do so by means of the *Medical Times and Gazette*.

About twelve years ago I was called to see a patient with delirium tremens, residing about a mile from my house, who was almost *in articulo*. I prescribed a dose of chloric ether with tincture of opium; but the wife, who came for the medicine, took, by mistake, a phial containing one ounce of tincture of digitalis. I discovered the error; and was horrified when I heard the patient had taken this dose; but no less surprised than pleased when I also heard that, instead of being poisoned, he was very much better. Under ordinary treatment, I fully believed he would have died; but after this single dose he rapidly recovered. Profiting by this hint, I began to give digitalis in all the cases of delirium tremens which came under my care in Hospital and private practice; and during the last twelve years I have adopted it in at least seventy cases—this effect of drunkenness being very common in Jersey.

As to the dose, experience has taught me that the best dose is *half-an-ounce* of the tincture given in a little water. In some few cases, this one dose is enough, but generally a second dose is required four hours after the first. In some cases, but very seldom, a third dose is called for; but this hardly ever need exceed two-drachms. The largest quantity I have ever given was *half-an-ounce* at first, *half-an-ounce* four hours afterwards, and another *half-ounce* six hours after that—making an ounce and a-half in ten hours.

As to the effects of these doses, my impression is that the action is on the brain, not on the heart. The pulse, so far from being lowered in force, becomes fuller, and stronger, and more regular, soon after the first dose. The cold clammy perspirations pass off, and the skin becomes warmer. As soon as the remedy produces its full effect, sleep for five, six, or seven hours commonly follows; sleep is the guide as to the repetition of the dose. No action on the kidneys is evidenced by any unusual secretion of urine. Sometimes the bowels are slightly acted on, but not commonly. I have never once seen any alarming symptom follow the use of these large doses of digitalis. The only case I have lost since adopting this treatment had a tumour in the brain. In three only was other treatment adopted after digitalis had failed to procure sleep; in other words, in sixty-seven out of seventy cases digitalis was the only medicine used, and sixty-six of these patients recovered. I do not mean that these are the exact numbers of those treated; I am certain as to the death, but I may have had more recoveries. I am well within bounds in saying seventy cases in twelve years, and that all of them were well-marked cases of delirium tremens. Slight cases of nervous derangement after drinking I have seen in great numbers; but I speak here only of such cases as required active treatment. My previous experience of the results of the treatment by opium, or some of its preparations, by anti-spasmodics, etc., had certainly been much less successful; the proportion of deaths was larger, and the recovery much less rapid. Again; I have treated