

ON THE TREATMENT OF ASTHMA.

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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—This paper is written with the object of showing the beneficial effect of chloral hydrate in the treatment of asthma. Asthma being a disease marked always by a certain amount of periodicity in the attacks of dyspnoea, and being divided into the three varieties of cardiac, dyspeptic, and bronchitic, the latter form being the most common.

Taking for a theoretical basis the idea that the attacks originate from some peripheral disturbance of some branch or branches of the pneumogastric nerve, which is communicated to the nerve centre, and that the attack could be arrested by paralyzing the nerve centre, as it were, the paroxysm could be cut short, and if cut short, the habit would ultimately be broken up, I thought that chloral hydrate would have the desired effect. The first case that came under treatment was an old standing one of thirty years, of the cardiac variety. This old gentleman had been subject in the first years of the disease to the violent periodical paroxysms, but latterly it had become almost continuous, so much so indeed, that he had not lain down in bed for some months. The remedy was given in ʒi doses at first, as I presume, it was by most of us when it came into use. The dose was then gradually decreased until five grains, three times a day, were taken. The effect of the treatment was such, that in a very short time, he was greatly relieved of his asthma, and at the end of six months he was entirely free from it. He lived for ten years afterwards and never was troubled with it again, although living in the same neighbourhood. He told me that he gave my prescription to others suffering from the same disease in his locality, and that it entirely relieved them.

The next cases treated were four members of the same family. I had treated the father for some time on the old plan that I had been accustomed to, but with only temporary relief. As soon as he began the new treatment with chloral hydrate he began to improve, and after three months he had no return of the disease.

Sometime afterwards the mother came for treatment for the same disease and in her case I believe she never had a subsequent attack. About two years after, the son and daughter came to be treated for the disease and were well enough to discontinue the remedy, one in three and the other in six months.

The next case was that of a lady whom I had treated for asthma for twelve years with very unsatisfactory results. On commencing the treatment by the then new remedy, she obtained six or eight hours sleep, during which the breathing was tranquil; but as soon as she waked, the difficulty returned in full force. She continued the treatment for some years with the above-named effects, but ultimately died from the disease.

The next case was that of a middle-aged woman whose asthma was evidently due to dyspepsia. She was always relieved at once of the attack, but some error in diet would bring on an attack at any time; as I lost sight of her I presume she was not cured.

Next comes the case of an elderly lady whom I saw in consultation. The same treatment relieved her entirely from the spasmodic attacks, but she never regained her normal breathing on account of extensive emphysema. In this case and subsequently the dose of the medicine was reduced to one scruple or ʒss, and repeated if necessary.

Then comes the case of a young man, aged twenty-two, with his first attack which was fully established before treatment was commenced. In his next attack about three months after, it was broken up at once and he never had another, and that is two years ago.

Still another young man of twenty-three who had suffered from chronic bronchitis for a year, had a violent attack of asthma, which gave way to the treatment at once, and for a year he was free from both bronchitis and asthma. At the expiration of the year he had another paroxysm which was soon broken up and he has not had another since.

Again, with regard to the disease in young children, when the diagnosis is made out, which is not always easy, the effect of the treatment has been very remarkable. Four cases from three to ten years of age, treated by from six