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PRACTICAL MEDICINE.

TREATMENT OF SICK HEADACHE

About a year ago there was published in the British Medical Journal the results of the experience of a large number of leading British physicians regarding the treatment of this distressing affection. The substance of the report amounted pretty much to this: that the relief afforded by the medical man was, as a rule, so trifling that the patient took the matter into his own hands and found by experience the best way to obviate or alleviate the attack, or made up his mind that the affection was incurable. Bromide of potassium was however, noticed as a drug, occasionally capable of affording relief. Dr Williams, of the Sussex Lunatic Asylum, also recorded the experience, at that institution, of Indian hemp as a remedy, and stated the opinion of his colleague, Dr Green, and himself, that this drug was worthy of extended trial. Since the appearance of our report, guarana or paullinia powder, a remedy for sick-headache which has been employed in France and elsewhere for some years, was brought prominently before the notice of the profession in this country by Dr Wilks. The results obtained are very various, and show that our knowledge of its modus operandi is most incomplete. An extended trial of guarana, and a careful observation of the class of cases in which it is of value, will probably lead ere long to a more definite knowledge of its therapeutical value. We are glad to have the opportunity of recording the views of Dr Wilks on guarana and the other remedies which his special attention to the subject has led him to employ since the publication of his first paper. The opinion entertained by him regarding the value of cannabis Indica is shared by another of the writers in the report. Indian hemp seems deserving of a full trial.

"As regards the treatment of sick-headache," says Dr Wilks, "I have until late years been able to do little more than recommend to my patients the avoidance of all those circumstances which they know by experience would induce an attack. I allude, of course, to nervous headache, for I believe that this is almost the only form for which we are consulted; a temporary disturbance of the head arising from various causes, requiring no medicine, or but a casual dose. During the last three or four years I have been able, with others in my profession, to do something more positive than preach hygienic principles to my patients, having in our possession three remedies which have been doing eminent service in this terrible complaint. In the first place, there is the bromide of potassium, which is so valuable a medicine in many cases of sick headache that it can scarcely be superseded by a better remedy. The patient who is very often a gentleman, comes home with a splitting headache, fatigued and tired after a hard day's work; he takes fifteen

or twenty grains of bromide of potassium, presently goes off to sleep in his easy chair, and wakes in an hour well. I have known this to occur in so many instances, that I cannot hesitate in my belief as to the efficacy of this medicine. It is one which I always first employ, having seen such eminent advantages follow its use. I have known many patients declare, that the bromide was the first medicine they had taken in their lives which had had the slightest effect in relieving their headache.

"About two years ago, I commenced to use the cannabis Indica, and I have no hesitation in saying that in this drug we possess a most valuable remedy against headache. I have never given it in large doses with the object of counteracting the pain by producing an immediate effect, but have employed it in doses of a few drops three times a day, and continued for some weeks. In several cases where my patients were subject to constant headache, great benefit was experienced, several of them having written to say they had got rid of their trouble, or it had been less frequent. I consider it superior to all other remedies in this respect that, if efficacious at all, it preserves the patient from his malady; whereas other medicines do little more than arrest the attacks when they have commenced. I have not given cannabis in the manner recommended by Dr Williams (of Hayward's Heath), in the form of a dose of the extract daily.

"Thirdly, guarana has been introduced to our notice as a remedy for sick-headache, and here, again, we have a very valuable addition to our pharmacopoeia. In many instances, especially those of ladies, I have had the most positive assurance given to me of the power of this drug in arresting headache, so that not the slightest doubt can be entertained of its immense value. A dose is usually taken when the headache is approaching and if this is not quickly successful in arresting it, a second powder is swallowed; after an hour or so if the remedy is to be useful, the headache has disappeared. I know of several cases in which the greatest enthusiasm is expressed by patients as to its merits. At the same time I am constantly hearing of cases where it has failed. I am now trying it in smaller doses by daily administration.

I feel certain that these three drugs—bromide of potassium, cannabis Indica, and guarana—constitute a most important addition to our nerve medicines, and that in them we have remedies against a terrible complaint which a few years ago constituted the opprobrium of medicine. I might say that I know of cases where galvanism has very speedily cured a pain in the head; and I can call to mind the case of a lady, where the application of the bisulphide of carbon invariably relieved the most severe headache.—Brit. Med. Journ.

WASHINGTON SURGERY.

DRESSINGS OF COTTON WADDING.

By WALTER REID, M.D., Surgeon, Royal Navy.

A new method of dressing wounds, at present attaining great popularity amongst French surgeons, is that which is known as the "pansement ouaté" of M. Alphonse Guerin, of the Hotel Dieu. It consists in the use of large quantities of cotton wadding, somewhat after the manner of treating extensive burns with the same material. About two years ago, towards the close of the war, and during the days of the Commune, M. Guerin first put this in practice in the Hôpital St. Louis. The properties which cotton wadding possesses of filtering the atmosphere, the regular elastic compression and uniform temperature which its application induces, were qualities which he thought might be turned to good account in the treatment of wounds and other surgical diseases. An attendance of nearly six months in the hospitals of Paris during the course of the winter has enabled me to write with some authority on this subject, which well merits the attention of the profession in this country.

The method is peculiarly applicable to cases of amputation, and in order to describe the manner in which I will suppose a thigh amputation at the thigh. Bleeding being carefully stopped, the ligatures are cut short, except that of the main artery, which is allowed to remain of the usual length. The wound is then washed with a solution of camphor and alcohol, of carbolic acid, or other disinfectant. The stump being now elevated and the loose integuments slightly stretched outwards by an assistant, portions of cotton wadding are inserted so as completely to fill without distending the cavity thus formed. Several layers of the same material are then applied over the stump, and carried in the form of broad rollers round the limb as high as the groin or pelvis. The volume of the whole ought to be at least three times that of the thigh, or about the circumference of the patient's waist. A number of bandages are then carefully applied, the constriction being at first moderate, but gradually increasing until it is as powerful as the hands of the surgeon can make it. The limb is now placed in a horizontal position, supported by a pillow, and allowed to remain so for twenty or thirty days.

The first thing that strikes the surgeon is that the patient, during the whole of this period is free from pain which neither comes on spontaneously, nor is it induced by the contact of surrounding objects, or by their shock. A peculiar odour is generally exhaled during the first ten or fifteen days, which, however, can be destroyed by the use of disinfectants applied to the outside of the apparatus.

I recently saw in the service of M. Guerin, the removal of the dressing in a case of amputation

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