

Brinton, following Chomel, condemned the use of strychnia in stomach-diseases as unnecessary and dangerous. (*Diseases of the Stomach*, p. 334.) But, notwithstanding the condemnation of these authorities, strychnia has held its place in these affections, because, although too often given without discrimination, it proves beneficial in many instances. The secret of its successful administration lies in the recognition of the cases. It is suited for cases characterized by the symptoms of impaired motion; namely, uneasiness, but not actual pain, after food, and flatulence. It is not suited for cases of impaired secretion, characterised by pain after food and little or no flatulency.

Some precautions are of course necessary, and more so because the patients are seldom under daily observation. A dose of one-twentieth of a grain should rarely be exceeded. It should never be given in pills, on account of the difficulty of exact subdivision in that form. The susceptibility of the alkaloid to precipitation by alkalis and some other substances must be kept in view. If so precipitated, the whole of the drug would, of course, be contained in the last dose in the bottle. For the rest, the pharmacist must be responsible. But, after having prescribed strychnia some thousand times, I never knew any harm to arise from its use.

It might be supposed that electricity would prove useful for lesions of peristalsis; but, after many trials of faradisation and a few of the direct current, I am compelled to say that I do not regard it as an useful agent in this affection.

It is sometimes desirable to check flatulence by some agent which hinders fermentation. Formerly, I prescribed carbolic acid for this purpose; but its unpleasant taste is a great drawback. Of late, I have used thymol with, I think, better results; and the taste is far less objectionable.

Many cases are met with in which the stomach is unable to expel flatus in consequence of temporary paralysis from over-distension. Various drugs given to promote contraction of the organ—carminatives as they are called—sometimes fail in their purpose. It is in such cases that charcoal proves useful. Charcoal

possesses a remarkable power of absorbing gases; but this power, as I have elsewhere shown, is very much lessened by long keeping and by wetting. This led me to the plan of giving, in hermetically sealed gelatin capsules, charcoal prepared from vegetable ivory, which kind was proved by experiment to possess the best absorbing power. If in cases of obstinate gastric distension, three or four such charcoal-capsules be swallowed, a few cubic inches of carbonic acid gas will be speedily absorbed. Tension being now removed, the muscular coat of the stomach generally resumes its power, and flatus is freely expelled.* In a few obstinate cases, however, chiefly when the stomach-affection is secondary to diseases of the liver or kidneys, the muscular paralysis is so complete that, as happens in case of the over-distended *rumen* in cud-chewing animals, mechanical interference is the most effective mode of treatment. For this purpose, I have had made a small India-rubber tube (tube shown) two feet in length, having one extremity closed, and perforated like a drainage-tube to the distance of four inches from the end. Such a tube can be safely and easily introduced into the stomach, and will prove effectual in relieving the distended organ.

I am convinced that certain symptoms, described as a sinking sensation in the gastric region, craving for food soon after meals, etc., are generally to be attributed to hyperperistalsis or exaggerated movements of the stomach. But this constitutes a distinct disease, to be separately discussed. The same remark applies to dyspepsia of liquids and the flaccid state of the stomach which exists in that affection.—*Brit. Med. Journal.*

ATROPIA FOR URTICARIA.—In three cases of severe and stubborn urticaria, after everything else had failed, Frænkel (*Berliner Klin. Wochenschrift*) found that the internal use of atropia succeeded in promptly allaying the annoying itching. It will not, however, prevent relapse.

* Perhaps the best proof of the utility of this charcoal so administered is to be found in the fact, that the capsules are manufactured on a very large scale, and are exported largely.