

PRACTICAL MEDICINE.

TINCTURE OF DIGITALIS AND CHLORAL HYDRATE IN DELIRIUM TREMENS.

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Having in the course of twenty odd years, seen numerous cases of delirium tremens under various kinds of treatment, it is with peculiar pleasure that I record the following very remarkable success as a result of chloral hydrate in conjunction with tincture of digitalis.

Mr. B., a Scotchman, aged thirty, accustomed to army life, was for many years connected with the Indian service in the west. During this time he acquired the habit of using alcoholic drinks, which has followed him till a few months ago, when he was induced to reform. He got on very well for a time, when the old appetite was aroused in him by the thoughtless use of some light beer which he made and sold in connection with his other business, and in which there was a free amount Sanford's ginger. Strong drink was now called for, ana, becoming incapable of carrying on his business, "he went on a time." Alcohol became more and more the substitute for food, till his system became poisoned, his tongue parched and swollen, his face congested, his breath fetid and he could neither eat nor sleep. When I first saw him, he had neither taken food nor slept for nearly a week, and rejected everything which was put into his stomach; his mind was greatly agitated, and his whole muscular system was in a state of continual unrest. His pulse was feeble and frequent, amounting to 120, and could not be counted at the wrist on account of its commotion among the tendons. He had taken bromide of potassium, without effect, before my visit. A strong mustard plaster was applied to the pit of his stomach; when well under way, fifty grains of chloral were given and, in two minutes, twenty drops tincture digitalis. These were both retained and had a favourable effect upon the tremors. Ten minutes after the digitalis, a dose of thirty grains of chloral soon brought on a sleep of three hours, when he awoke with relief to his trembling and in a much better state of mind. A raw egg and some milk were then given with another portion of digitalis, and, in a short time, thirty grains more of the chloral. From that time, he passed off into a sleep of many hours and awoke refreshed. The digitalis was given several times a day for several days, partly to moderate the pulse which remained at a hundred, but mainly for its eliminating effects upon the kidneys; and small doses of the chloral as occasion required. An infusion of quassia with a return solid food, as his appetite required and his stomach would bear, completed the cure, which, taken all in all, was the most satisfactory that could have been desired.

This was not caused by leaving off his cups, but the direct result of their excessive use. From the moment he came under treatment he was not allowed another drop, except what was in his digitalis. That he would have recovered without treatment is quite doubtful, since he was then in a gradually sinking condition and had not for days taken a mouthful of food which he

did not instantly reject, even a teaspoonful of milk being as quickly rejected as it was swallowed, though it is possible that he might have been sustained by nutritious injections till the alcoholism wore away. Opium was obviously contra-indicated by the parched mouth and fetid breath, for whatever advantage might have been hoped for from sleep, which it might be expected to give would have been more than offset by the increased retention of the alcoholic poison and other effects matter which required to be eliminated. The chloral then to produce sleep and to quiet the nervous agitation, and the digitalis to reduce the frequency of the heart's action and to promote elimination by the kidneys, was evidently the rational indication, which the results fully justified. The mustard over the pit of the stomach and a small dose of chloral at first were necessary, in order that the first dose might be retained and prepare the way for a full dose which could not be given at once. Moderate doses of chloral, to be repeated as circumstances justify, are all that any case of delirium tremens is likely to require, since, as Dr. Murchison thinks, there are grounds to believe that the existing impurities of the blood in such a case favour the action of the chloral by its more speedy conversion into chloroform.—
[Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

GOAT'S MILK.

Dr H. MacCormac maintains that goat's milk may be abstracted from the living animal, and transferred at once to the infant's stomach, by means of a tube provided with an artificial nipple. In this way, it is thought, the mortality hitherto attendant on artificial lactation may be greatly diminished.

ON THE BRAIN.

Professor Ferrier delivered a lecture in the Section of Biology, at the British Association for the Advancement of Science, "On the Localization of the Functions of the Brain," in which he stated the results of a series of experiments which he had conducted during the last year upon the brains of living animals by means of a small electrical machine. His first object had been to stimulate the brain, with a view of ascertaining whether, in opposition to the theory of Brown Séquard, he could in this way produce activity of the brain. In carrying on these experiments, he had dealt with cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs, fish, a jackall, and a monkey; and had obtained results which led to the discovery of an entirely new system of phrenology. Applying the electrical stimulus to certain convolutions of the brain of the inferior animals, he almost invariably produced certain motions—thus establishing the existence of a close connection between those portions of the brain and the action of particular muscles. Pursuing his investigations, he also established a similar connection between other portions of the brain and the senses of hearing, seeing, and speaking; and speculation enabled him to guess, with tolerable accuracy, at those parts of the brain which were the seat of thought, memory, and sensation.—*Dublin Medical Press and Circular.*

MEDICAL NEWS.

Cholera has appeared at Antwerp and Rotterdam. At the former port fifteen deaths out of a total of thirty cases have occurred.

We regret to have to record the death, from hepatic cancer, of Dr. Robert William Smith, for many years Regius Professor of Surgery in the University of Dublin.

Small-pox is said to be steadily on the increase in Montreal, and complaint is made that the city authorities are not taking any steps to prevent it from extending into an epidemic.

Typhoid fever, superinduced by wall contamination, has broken out in the neighbourhood of Wellington, Herefordshire, thirty cases having already been reported. It is said that the district is utterly unprovided with any system of drainage.

The Hospital Sunday movement is making marked progress in Manchester. From a report issued, it appears that while in 1872 the amount raised was 6971 pounds, the collections for the current year have reached 8668 pounds.

The town of Faridabad, near Delhi, is suffering from a fatal form of disease, which at first was thought to be cholera, but is now said to be fever accompanied by diarrhoea and vomiting. The mortality, according to the latest returns, had reached the enormous rate of 110 deaths per 1000.

The entries at the German universities for the year 1873-4 are 7467; 3904 being for the winter, and 3563 for the summer session. The number of medical students 2479. The total number is 851 less than the previous year, there being a falling-off of 444 in the medical entries alone.

An advertisement was recently inserted by the authorities of a small hospital in the south of London for a secretary, who, in return for five hours' work a day, was offered a salary of 150 pounds. It is interesting to know that the answers to the advertisement exceeded 300 in number, and among the applicants were a colonel in the army and a titled member of a noble family.

There is to be another medical college in Philadelphia—the Medical Department of Lincoln University. This institution, located at Oxford, Chester county, Pennsylvania, was established some years ago, and is rapidly growing in importance. It is intended especially to meet the educational wants of the negro, Mongolian, and Indian races. The medical department is now fully organized, and its early removal to Philadelphia is contemplated, where the students will have the advantage of clinical instruction in one or two of the prominent hospitals. An effort is now being made to raise funds for establishing a dispensary and hospital in connection with the department, and the indications are that the effort will be attended with success. There is no hospital in Philadelphia for the exclusive use of coloured people, and the prominent and wealthy citizens among them will, no doubt, make generous contributions to, and use their influence on behalf of the object.

The announcement of the death of Mr. Grace Calvert, F.R.S., of Manchester, will not be received without great regret by those to whom he was known as an energetic and fruitful labourer in the field of pure and applied science. To the public at large and to sanitarians Mr. Calvert is chiefly known as the author of improvements in the production of carbolic acid, which have led to its extensive use as an antiseptic and disinfecting agent. It has proved also to be a therapeutic agent of no small value. It is by this, probably, that Mr. Calvert will be best known. His researches, however, extended over a wide field, and included the investigation of many abstract researches, and on one occasion he nearly fell a victim to an explosion occurring during the prosecution of experiments in the production of sulphuric acid. His death was due to the sequela of typhoid fever contracted recently in Vienna, while he was staying there in the discharge of his duty as a juror at the International Exhibition.