

mediate contact of noise with the super-sensitive organ, such was his impressive condition that his father was compelled to relinquish farming for several months, being unable to thrash his grain, or drive his team past the house.

In the latter part of summer, he experienced stitches in the posterior part of his head, which were followed by pain in the back, shooting up to the head; but these finally left him, so that at the present time he does not complain of any. His reason seems to have become impaired with the increase of the malady, especially on some points, though not on all—often conversing for hours without showing any impairment of the mental faculties whatever. His memory has remained perfect throughout the illness; he recollects apparently everything that has occurred, but his temper is greatly changed; he often breaks out into violent rage, and, at the same time, makes use of language which he never did before his sickness. His shyness, or dread of strangers, commenced about the time he lost the use of his limbs. He cannot be prevailed upon by any of the family to permit many of his near relatives to see him, but above all he objects to physicians; for whom he has the greatest dread imaginable. For more than a year anorexia was great, so that it was often difficult to prevail on him to take the least quantity of nourishment; consequently he became greatly emaciated; of late, however, his appetite has improved greatly—he has become more fleshy, and has evidently grown within the last nine months. He has had no medical treatment since his first attack: upon this point his father—in a letter dated February 19th, 1845—speaks thus: “I sincerely believe it was impossible to have resorted to any active means since last May, owing to his great prostration and utter abhorrence of all physicians. I have been expecting every day would be his last for some months.”

Since last April the super-sensitiveness of the auditory nerve has been gradually diminishing, until it has become nearly natural; and he now seldom complains of noise disturbing him, unless it is very loud. His appetite has returned, so that he takes a good share of nutritious aliment; consequently his nutrition has greatly improved, and he has evidently grown in stature within the last nine months. Although still unable to exert any control over his limbs or body when awake, it has been observed, of late, that he does change their position in his sleep. These are among the more marked changes which have occurred since last winter.—*Medical Examiner*.

MATERIA MEDICA AND PHARMACY.

ON THE EFFECTS OF EXTRACT OF CONIUM MACULATUM.

By HOSEA FOUNTAIN, M.D., of Somers, Westchester co., New York.

I was much interested in reading an article in the number of the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences* for July last, from the pen of Dr Earle of New York, on the effects of the extract of *conium maculatum*. As I have been in the habit of prescribing this remedy occasionally, and always observing marked effects from its use, I was much surprised at the slight results obtained from the large quantities mentioned by your correspondent. His communication describes the symptoms arising from the internal use of the drug as usually found, I suppose, in the shops, which were so slight and transitory, that we may safely conclude that the medicine is either inert, and should, therefore, be discarded from the materia medica, or that the extract experimented with was improperly prepared, or had lost its virtue by age or some other cause.

That *conium* is an active agent, few who have witnessed the effects of a well-prepared fresh extract will be disposed

to doubt; and that it is useful in disease must be admitted, when such troublesome complaints as chronic affections of the liver, habitual costiveness, jaundice, &c., are relieved, and often cured by this remedy alone.

To show that *conium* does act with some energy on the system in less quantities than taken by Dr. Earle, I will describe the effects of a single dose on myself. The extract was prepared from the fruit, or seeds of the plant, with no other care than that the infusion was not at any time allowed to reach the boiling point. When of a syrupy consistence, the evaporation was finished in shallow pans, in the open air.

Fearing, from its dark color, it had been injured in its preparation, I swallowed about twelve grains, to test its activity, and quietly awaited its effects. Half an hour passed away without any alteration in my feelings, when supposing the medicine worthless, I threw part of it, from which I was preparing some pills, in the street, and started on my daily ride. In a few minutes, however, I observed a dimness of vision, with bright points scintillating, or rather quickly moving in the distance. This caused me to turn from side to side to notice them: and from this cause, I suppose, I found myself reeling in the saddle. There was no vertigo or unpleasant sensation about the head to produce this effect, save a slight feeling of lightness. Very soon, a numb, pricking sensation was felt in the fingers, extending gradually to the elbows, producing a stiffness of the muscles of the parts, making it difficult to move the forearm and hand. In a few minutes the same sensation was observed in the feet, creeping slowly upward, until it reached the upper part of the thigh. The eyes now began to feel uncomfortable, causing me to brush them frequently, to clear apparent obstructions from the lids. The pulse was soft and feeble, but not more frequent than usual. In dismounting, about an hour from the commencement of the symptoms, I found so much difficulty in walking as to require assistance to reach the house, the inferior extremities appearing nearly paralyzed. So little pain or distress was felt, however, that I laughed heartily at the predicament I had so unwittingly placed myself in. Feeling anxious to get rid of this annoyance, as well as from the solicitude of those around me, I tried what effects smoking of tobacco would produce. I had been in the habit of using this luxury occasionally, and at this time had a strong desire for it. Whether from this cause, or from rest and composure, I soon felt very much relieved. Vision became clearer; the limbs less troublesome; and whilst sitting, little or no apparent effects of the poison remained. On rising, however, the inferior extremities persisted in their unwillingness to move; but much less so than before. The whole day passed away without being entirely rid of these feelings, and it was not until I enjoyed my usual sleep that perfect vision was restored. I will observe, that the intellect appeared unaffected, the bowels and kidneys were not disturbed, neither was any soporific effect produced. The action appeared to be confined to the brain, exhausting it of blood, and diminishing its energy. Hence the partial paralysis, which a few more grains would, perhaps, have rendered complete. The aberration of vision arose from the same cause: and convulsions from exhaustion, as from loss of blood, would probably have followed, had a larger quantity been taken.

As I quote this case from memory, I cannot speak positively as to the lapse of time between the taking of the extract and its effects; otherwise this statement is as correct as one can be expected to describe from one's own experience and feelings.

In this instance, it will be observed that a small quantity compared with what Dr. Earle took, produced symptoms of the poisoning of hemlock; so much so, that I could not be persuaded to experiment on myself with a larger quantity of the same extract. A single pill of this, of three or four grains, produced very unpleasant effects on a young man af-