

test; and that he was able to detect, by its means, as little as 1 grain of nitre in 10 oz. of urine, which neither of the other tests would indicate.—*Proceedings of the Royal Society.*

*Case of Colica Pictorum, from the medical employment of Acetate of Lead.—With remarks.* By L. S. JOYNES, M. D., of Accomack. The following case is communicated, with the hope that it may prove a useful caution to some of the younger members of the profession, who may be inclined, from over-confidence in the assurances of many of our standard authors, to make too free a use of the potent drug above mentioned. It cannot be doubted that young practitioners in general are too prone to adopt heroic methods of practice, and to esteem boldness and decision the chief qualities of a successful physician. Of all the rich fruits which experience brings with it, not the least valuable, certainly, is *caution* in the employment of active remedial agents—all of which, without exception, are potent for evil as well as for good.

It has often appeared to me, that one of the most valuable contributions that could be made to the science of medicine, would be a faithful record of the *real experience* of the profession in the use of the class of remedies just referred to—setting forth the deleterious effects which may be caused by antimony, opium, mercury, lead, &c., as prominently as the good they are capable of accomplishing. Such a record would furnish the most useful lesson of caution in practice that could be given. A desire to contribute to this useful kind of information has influenced me in furnishing the following case for publication—in regard to which, I must admit that the length of time which has elapsed since its occurrence renders my history of it less complete than is desirable, inasmuch as I made no record of it at the time, and am compelled to rely chiefly on memory for the details.

On the 15th of October 1843, Mr. J. J. B., merchant, aged 25, consulted me on account of a chronic diarrhœa, which had troubled him from time to time for several years, and which had always been obstinate and intractable. He had been treated by different physicians, who had prescribed a great variety of remedies, nearly all of which seemed of little efficacy. After listening to the details of his case, I

became satisfied that acetate of lead and opium would prove the most efficient remedy; and as none of his previous medical advisers had prescribed this combination, I determined to give it a trial. I believe I had never before prescribed the acetate of lead, but I relied, very naturally, on the assurances, everywhere to be met with in the books, that the use of the drug is free from risk, provided a perfectly pure article be employed, and acetic acid in some form be prescribed in conjunction with it.

I accordingly selected the most perfect crystals of the acetate; added more than enough of distilled vinegar to neutralize any of the carbonate which might be present as an impurity; then adding the opium, I made the mass into pills. I also directed the patient, immediately after taking each pill, to swallow a teaspoonful of vinegar. The precise formula which I employed I am unable now to state, but my recollection is distinct, that the entire quantity taken was 30 grains, in the course of about four days. The medicine proved most efficient in the relief of the diarrhœa, the discharges being arrested more promptly than by any other remedy, and without any *immediate* ill effects. The patient and myself were both congratulating ourselves upon the favorable result, when one day, perhaps a week after he discontinued the pills, he complained to me of a pain in the epigastrium, radiating to the spine. As the patient was then apparently regaining his health, and in good spirits, I paid little attention to this complaint, supposing it to be a momentary gastralgic affection, occasioned by some imprudence in diet. Not long after, I learned that he was laboring under a severe attack of colic, and I was called on by Dr. Young of this place, his ordinary medical attendant, who came on purpose to ascertain the composition of the pills which the patient had been taking. The peculiar character of the colic with which he was at that time suffering, so strongly resembled those of colica pictorum, that Dr. Young had been led to enquire of him whether he had taken any medicine recently for diarrhœa. There could indeed be little doubt, from the account given me of the symptoms, and the subsequent progress of the case, that the attack was one of saturnine colic, of more than ordinary severity.

This attack commenced on the 3d of November, about a fortnight after the patient had taken the last pill, and con-