

THE DOMINION MEDICAL JOURNAL.

VOL. I.—No. 3.

TORONTO, ONT., NOVEMBER, 1868.

PRICE, \$2 PER ANN.

Original Communications.

A CASE OF GASTRIC NEURALGIA CURED BY ARSENIOUS ACID IN VERY MINUTE DOSES.

By DR. BRAITHWAITE, C.M.,
PRINCE ALBERT.

I will premise the remarks I intend to make concerning this case by stating the pleasure and interest I experienced on reading in the July number of *Braithwaite's Retrospect* the article on "Gastric Affections," by Dr. Leared, and his treatment by arsenic. As also the gratification I felt on seeing in a foot-note on page 202, the words, "We are fully aware that Homœopathy contains an element of truth. Shall we continue to reject that element merely because Hahnemann buries it in so much rubbish? I cannot believe so; and I think that the recognition of the *double action of drugs* might serve as a basis on which the two opposing schools might, ultimately, be reconciled. "A consummation devoutly to be wished." This foot note occurs in the course of an article on "Anconite," by Dr. Archibald Keith, of the Aberdeen Infirmary, and manifests a liberality of spirit too seldom, to our shame, met with in our profession. I shall allude to this want of liberality subsequently. And now to my case.

Mrs. C—, middle-aged, is the mother of eight children, ailing for years. Have known her for four years. Attended her in two confinements. General health: miserable. Martyr to deranged liver, bowels and stomach, accompanied with much pain in back, weakness and numbness in extremities. Suffered for years with cramps, periodically, at first every two or three months; latterly, the cramps were almost continuous, and seemed to concentrate their energies more especially about the region of the stomach. I have watched her case more closely for the last eighteen months, and can therefore quote from memory with more confidence. Prior to her last confinement, she suffered dreadfully from a continuous aching pain in her sides and back, with wandering pains over her abdomen; frequent cramps would at times seize her, causing her much suffering. She became *enciente*, and, in

my ignorance, I cherished the hope that altered circumstances might influence my patient for the better. But no! Her nocturnal sufferings were much aggravated, her cramps more frequent, her pains more numerous. I may state in this connection, that about the fifth month of pregnancy, and long after she had distinctly noticed motion in the child—all motion ceased, the contents of the womb would gravitate according to the position she assumed, and she distinctly stated (without being asked) that a sensation of coldness was quite perceptible. I examined by ear and finger, and was none the wiser. This state of affairs continued for *over one month*, and I was daily expecting to be sent for to remove a putrid child, when I was informed that motion had been again felt. From that time to the date of her delivery all went on well, so far as the child was concerned. A fine healthy girl lives to answer for itself. During the period above referred to there was no evidence of cessation to the general misery. Morphia was her sheet anchor. I had striven hard to get some substitute, but nothing else would answer. She could take two grains of the sulphate without inconvenience.

Again I was led to hope that after her confinement she would be better. Imagined that perhaps her peculiar condition might, peradventure, account for at least the aggravation of her symptoms. About this time the suffering appeared to show an inclination to concentrate itself more especially about the stomach and back, getting worse at night. Her appetite completely failed her. I was about overlooking the fact that for years her eyes have been adenomatous and watery, that she is excessively nervous, and has lived in a very low, marshy locality. All this summer she has had the same story to tell, "no better, Doctor," with the additional remark, that her stomach "felt as though some lizard or snake was gnawing and biting at it." Now, it might be asked, "What did I do?" I can answer by asking, "What didn't I do?" except give arsenic. Alternatives, tonics, sedatives, &c., had been exhausted, and I wished the woman safely out of my hands. A brilliant idea struck me. There was the bleared condition of the eyes, there was the dusky hue of skin, the foul tongue, the loss of appetite, the *periodicity*, the *marshy locality*, the fixed and peculiar gnawing pain in the