

marrow, caused by a fall on the head when a child, the arm when reduced, on the occasion spoken of, returned afterwards to its abnormal position. The pressure of the head of the bone not being on the axillary plexus of nerves, but on the soft pectoral muscle, gave not much pain or inconvenience, and escaped particular notice. My impression is also, that during the epileptic convulsions, the humerus was jerked further inwards out of its artificial joint, and that the noise heard when reduction was first attempted, arose from its being removed from the second dislocation again into the first, because before this had taken place, rotation was impossible, and the attempt caused much pain.

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Possibly an independent judgment should have anticipated the true history of this case, and jumped to the conclusion to which we at last arrived; but the reputation of the surgeon appeared to be at stake—another opprobrium was to be heaped upon our science, and a man was to be turned upon the world maimed for life; hence the persistent efforts and the desire to accomplish the end. Yet some extenuating circumstances attend the case: the patient when first seen was quite unable to give a history of himself; there was the bone lying plain and unsightly in its abnormal position, and where is the surgeon who would not have attempted its reduction under the circumstances?

This case, in itself instructive, might yet be useful in a medico-legal point of view.

### ACUTE POISONING BY ERGOT.

By DR. OLDRIGHT.

Abstract of a paper read before the Medical Section Canadian Institute, Toronto.

The ergot was given three days after delivery to control secondary hæmorrhage. The loss by flooding was very slight. About two hours, or more, after the administration of the ergot, the patient began to feel a tingling in the fingers and feet, cramps in the legs, arms and chest, dizziness and weakness; the pupils became dilated, and the pulse very small, and, if memory serves, accelerated. At the same time, a feeling of coldness was complained of. Stimulants and warmth were applied. In about an

hour the symptoms gradually subsided, and all went well for a few hours, when the same symptoms recurred, but with greater intensity. Stimulants were again administered, and heat was applied to the surface of the body by means of extra bed-clothes, hot bottles, and flannels dipped in hot water. This was continued for two or three hours, and it was not till the end of that time that the slightest diaphoresis, or even a good glow of heat, was induced. Then the face and head suddenly became intensely congested, being of a purplish red color. Pain was felt in the head, and the patient seemed much excited and confused. A brother practitioner was called in, and it being feared that convulsions would occur, cold cloths were applied to the head. The intense engorgement gradually subsided, but the congestion continued for two or three days, as manifested by pain in the head, photophobia, &c. Another symptom which was noticed, was a diarrhoea, in which the stools were of a dark grey color and looked as though meal had been stirred through them. They had a peculiar sickly, indescribable odor, and were accompanied by griping pains.

This condition of the bowels was noticed in another case, occurring a few months after, where ergot had been given. Here, also, had been a good deal of weakness, and a continual recurrence of faintness; but this was attributed to loss of blood during labor and before it, the case having been almost one of placenta prævia.

As to the *modus operandi* of ergot in these cases, Wood, in his "Materia Medica" and "Dispensatory," teaches that it is a direct depressant, partially paralyzing the heart and the capillaries. I do not feel prepared to go very deeply into the question, but it seems probable that its primary action is excitant to the spinal and sympathetic portions of the nervous system, exciting muscular contraction, and increased tonicities of musculo-fibrous and fibrous tissues. Hence the spasms which it causes. In this way it would diminish the calibre of the arteries and capillaries, whilst it would impede (and here we must remember how continuous and unremitting is its action on the womb) the action of the heart, keeping it in a condition of *continuous* partial contraction. This causes starvation of