

## A NEW TREATMENT OF SLEEPLESSNESS.

Eccles regards the hot bath and massage as important factors in the treatment of insomnia. The bath is to be taken immediately before retiring, and with the following precautions: The bath-room must be heated to about  $70^{\circ}$  F., then the patient must be stripped in the bath-room, the head and face first being rapidly doused with water at  $100^{\circ}$  F. By this means the body is cooled, while a rush of blood is sent to the head. Then the whole body, excluding the head and face, is immersed in the bath at  $98^{\circ}$  F., rapidly raised to  $105^{\circ}$  or  $110^{\circ}$  F. In about eight to fifteen minutes the patient feels a sensation of pleasant languor, when he must be wrapped in warm blankets, and proceed to the bedroom with as little personal effort as possible. By the time the bedroom is reached the moisture on the surface of the body will have been absorbed; the patient must then put on his night-clothes and get into bed, lying with the head raised, hot bottles to the feet, and well covered with bed-clothes. No conversation or moving about the room should be allowed, and all light must be excluded. In a few minutes the patient will be found in a quiet, refreshing sleep. The theory of this method is based on sudden exposure of the body contracting the arterioles of the skin, causing thereby a corresponding dilatation of the vessels of internal organs, which in the case of the brain is further induced by the application of hot sponging. The immersion of the whole body next causes a dilatation of the vessels of the surface, except the head and face, with contraction of the vessels of the brain and gradual slowing of the heart's action, thus placing the brain in the most favorable condition for complete functional rest. There are certain conditions, however, in which this method is contraindicated. Persons suffering from extreme anæmia, or emaciation, or from aortic valvular disease, or in whom signs of atheroma are recognized, should not be subjected to such rapid variations of local arterial tension as this process entails. The author treated two cases of aortic regurgitation, in which the patients suffered from insomnia, by rest, feeding, and massage. The patient should keep the recumbent position all day, and in the evening, about 10 or 11 o'clock, a thorough kneading of the trunk and extremities should be performed. Massage of the trunk and extremities is attended by stimulation of the sensory nerves, with inhibition of vaso-motor action in the part undergoing vigorous kneading, the vessels dilate, and the force and rate of the circulation is increased, thus causing a vascular dilatation over a large area, accompanied by a corresponding contraction of other parts, especially of the brain. In order to maintain the effect of the massage on the vessels of the abdomen, a hot abdominal compress is used in some cases where sleep does

not follow soon after the massage. In persons suffering from the ill effects of prolonged overwork, mental distress, morphine habit, chloral-drinking, and such like conditions, the evening kneading often causes excitement instead of repose, and if done at all it must be done at an early hour. These cases are extremely difficult to treat, and it is often necessary to administer the wet pack.—*The Practitioner*, March, 1888.

## PEPPERMINT WATER IN PRURITUS PUDENDI.

Every practitioner will have had under his care cases of this troublesome affection, which have been proof against all treatment, especially in the neurosial forms, where the cause of the pruritus which is, of course, only a symptom, is more difficult to remove. No excuse, therefore, is needed to mention a local remedy, which will, if the skin be unbroken, either cure the patient, or afford relief whilst the source of the irritation is being treated.

The agent here alluded to is peppermint water, used as a lotion. The B.P. preparation of aq. menth. pip. answers well, but is bulky for carrying about, and is incapable of concentration unless rendered alkaline. This is best done by borax, as being in itself soothing and antiseptic. Patients can easily make their own lotion, as required for use, by putting a teaspoonful of borax into a pint bottle of hot water, and adding to it five drops of ol. menth. pip., and shaking well, the parts affected to be freely bathed with a soft sponge.

If no cracks or sores are present, this lotion will remove the itching, but if there be eczema, etc., or rawness from scratching, it is inapplicable, olive oil, with five grains of iodoform to the ounce, being then more useful. The greatest and most permanent relief is afforded in the neurosial form, especially in the reflex pruritus which often accompanies pregnancy, and which then may take the place of reflex sickness or vomiting. It is also very useful in the pruritus which occurs in the climacteric, or in elderly women, in whom it may be only part of a general pruritus, and also in those cases of women of all ages, where the urine simultaneously becomes of very low specific gravity, without any evidence of having a gouty or granular kidney as a remote cause.

In pruritus due to pediculi, ascarides, an irritable urethral caruncle, an endocervical polypus, early cancer of the cervix, distension of Bartholini's ducts or glands, the leucorrhœa of vaginitis, endocervicitis, and metritis, or the irritating discharges of advanced carcinoma uteri, or to a gouty or diabetic diathesis, the drug excels all others, cocaine inclusive, in affording relief, whilst endeavors are being made to remove the cause.

In two obstinate cases of uncontrollable pruritus of pregnancy, where this remedy only gave temporary relief, the patients were cured by applying iodine liniment to the angry looking cervix.