

than heretofore in this country. Not only will the medical practitioner and the agriculturist avail himself of a knowledge of organic chemistry in his particular vocation, but the magistrate, the guardian of the poor, and the legislator, must appeal on the gravest questions to the chemist for that knowledge which is alone calculated to ensure the success of his philanthropic exertions.

I may appear to have travelled somewhat out of the way of a review of Liebig's Chemistry in this paper, but it is absolutely essential to have the matter herein contained before us, in order to comprehend and examine many of his statements respecting digestion, nutrition, and the evolution of animal heat.

CASE OF

PUERPERAL MANIA,

WITH THE POST-MORTEM EXAMINATION.

By RICHARD R. PERRY, Esq., House-Surgeon to the General Lying-in Hospital, York-road, Lambeth.

MRS. ROBERTS, 4, Dyer-street, William-street, Blackfriars-road, aged 34, was delivered by a midwife of her seventh child, on the 1st of November last, after three days' labour. The pelvis was deformed, and forceps had been applied and craniotomy performed, in previous labours, yet she refused to have premature labour brought on, which had been repeatedly recommended to her. The consequence was, that this and every child had been still-born, with the exception of one, a girl, very small, which is now alive.

On the third day after delivery, Nov. 4, after a sleepless night, she complained of pain in the head and abdomen, and became restless and delirious. I was then sent for, and found her extremely violent, requiring two women to hold her. The pupils dilated, unaffected by a lighted candle; skin hot and moist; pulse 120, quite silent; winced on pressing the abdomen. The bowels had been freely opened on the day before by castor-oil. I ordered her laudanum, in saline mixture, every two hours, but they were only able to give her thirty minims (three doses).

Same day, noon. Pupils contracted; skin cool; more violent than before; and taciturnity had given way to violent delirium; pulse 120, small and feeble.

Five, p.m. Dr. Cape saw her; she was then incoherent, talking without intermission; pulse more feeble; surface of body cold; pupils still rigidly contracted; pain on pressing uterine region, but not acute. A blister to nape of neck, and half a grain of acetate of morphia every hour till sleep was produced.

Eleven, p.m. Has taken three powders;

perfectly quiet; rambling ceased; much less jactitation, but no sleep; pulse a little firmer; pupils still contracted. The strength was supported by gruel and brandy during the night, but the restlessness came on again, and she sank at eight, a.m., on the morning of the 5th, just twenty-eight hours after the attack.

In her delirium she spoke of her husband having had connection with her since her delivery; and the uterus having been felt by two married sisters after her death, above the pubis, was thought by them to corroborate it, having been, as they termed it, pushed up there. This he denied; nor was it at all likely, as every one admitted he had always treated her with the greatest kindness and affection during the eight years that they had been married. Still, nothing would satisfy the friends and the crowded neighbourhood, who attributed the mania to that circumstance, but a post-mortem examination, which I made on the same day, assisted by my colleague, Mr. Boddy, Dr. Cape being present.

Brain.—Veins and choroid plexus slightly congested. About a teaspoonful of water under the arachnoid, on the upper part of the posterior lobe of the right hemisphere. The whole of the brain was carefully sliced away, and carefully examined, but it was otherwise quite healthy.

Abdomen.—No inflammation of the peritoneum; no fluid effused; all the organs healthy, with the exception of the uterus, which, of course, was still above the pubis. Round the insertion of the left Fallopian tube was a patch of red ulceration, of the size of a dollar, in the peritoneal coat, and in the substance were two or three small cysts, one of the size of a nut, with glairy and purulent fluid in them. Dr. Hodgkin, who examined it, thought them enlargements of uterine sinuses, and plastic lymph could be drawn out from the veins opening into them. There was no inflammation of the uterine or spermatic veins.

The ovary on the left side had several false corpora lutea, and there was a true one in the right.

The os uteri was much bruised and congested.

The preparation is in the museum of St. Thomas's Hospital.

The *Pelvis* was deformed by the projection of the sacrum. It scarcely exceeded three inches in the antero-posterior diameter.

IODIDE OF POTASSIUM IN GOUT.

To the Editor.—Sir: I beg to say that I accord with the suggestion of Dr. Watson, to exhibit the iodide of potassium internally for the cure of gout (see LANCET, No. 1004*),

* Abridged from the Provincial Journal. —LANCET.

on the ground that I have found, after many years' trial, its solution in distilled water a most valuable external application for the cure of gout, rheumatism, tic douloureux, and chronic inflammation, with enlargement of the joints (see LANCET, Nov. 15, 1834, article on the remedial powers of the solutio iodidi potassii). Eight years have now elapsed since I called the attention of the profession to the efficacy of the solution of the iodide of potassium in chronic inflammation of the joints, whether arising from a specific or an accidental cause, after the usual routine practice had frequently been baffled, even in affording relief. Long ere that period I was in the habit of prescribing it as the best external application for gout, rheumatism, &c., and my confidence still remains unshaken in its curative powers.

Dr. Watson was silent on the *modus operandi* of the iodide of potassium, when exhibited internally for the cure of gout. The hiatus probably will in part be satisfactorily supplied by adding the following formula, which I invariably administer internally, as an adjunct to the lotion, viz. :—

Rx *Powd. nitr. potass*, ʒiv; *Potass. tart. of ant.*, gr. ij; *Sp. nitr. æther*, ℥j; *Water*, or *comp. infus.*, ℥xj. Mix.

Make a mixture. Dose, a wineglassful, morning, noon, and evening.

Although the above treatment has quite fulfilled the desired purpose, nevertheless I have no scruple in laying it aside for a season to try Dr. Watson's more simple method, and should the enemy again attack a young subject who has suffered most severely and frequently from gout, though not having yet reached the age of fifteen years, his case will be a fit one for trial, and the result shall be faithfully recorded in the instructive pages of THE LANCET. Your obedient servant,

J. H. HORNE.

Princes-street, Nov. 26, 1842.

POISONING BY THE INHALATION OF IMPURE NITROUS OXIDE GAS.

To the Editor,—Sir: The following case illustrates the peculiar effects produced by the inhalation of impure protoxide of nitrogen, or nitrous oxide:—Three young men had provided a bladder, containing two quarts of the nitrous oxide, for the purpose of exhibiting its exhilarating effects. One of them applied the bag in the usual way to his nostrils, and made about ten inspirations of its contents. Only a slight effect was produced, merely a reeling to and fro, as though labouring under intoxication, which state lasted about twenty seconds, when, thinking that sufficient inspirations had not been made, he again breathed the gas for a short time, and suddenly a series of the most violent muscular motions resulted, which re-

quired the combined strength of his companions to control, and continued with unabated force for full ten minutes, when his efforts relaxed, and, apparently, the effects were subsiding, as he became conscious of his situation; but only a few minutes had elapsed before he again exhibited similar forcible movements, striking out in all directions. These alternate intermissions and violent muscular exertions continued for half an hour. In the intervals of the paroxysms his manner and conversation were exactly similar to what is witnessed in the delirium produced by inebriety. On my arrival, finding his pulse beating with most rapid strength, I directed free cold affusion over the head and face, and, opening the temporal artery, took away about ten ounces of blood. Complete success attended these measures, restoring perfect sensibility, the patient expressing himself as being unconscious in the slightest degree of all that had occurred. Contrary to the usual effect of pure nitrous oxide (which produces no after depression, unlike other stimuli), intense languor and fatigue were complained of. The young man recovered in a day or two, merely experiencing a throbbing sensation in the region of the forehead, and a sense of constriction and pain over the right hypochondrium, which were most intense on regaining sensibility, subsequently, gradually disappearing. On inquiry, I found that while preparing the gas from the nitrate of ammonia, the flame was urged too rapidly, and a slight explosion was heard, filling the retort with red vapours. The bladder was immediately removed, and the experimentalists knowing that decomposition of the nitrate had resulted, feared that the gas was contaminated with nitrous acid and nitrogen, the products of decomposition. They tested it by a single inspiration, and its supporting combustion. Perceiving no indications of impurity, they believed that the bladder was removed from the retort before the impure gas had entered, which unfortunately could not have been the case. The subject of the above remarks had previously, on many occasions, inspired the nitrous oxide, the effects being very transient, and consisting solely of muscular exertion. I am quite at a loss to account for the cessation of the motions and their subsequent renewal, resembling so nearly an epileptic attack. That the sense of constriction on breathing was produced by the nitrous acid vapour I have no doubt, although present in such minute quantity as to be undiscernable by the tests applied. Perhaps some correspondents will favour me with their opinions of this case, the details of which I sincerely hope will prove a caution to incompetent persons undertaking the manufacture and inhalation of the nitrous oxide. I am, Sir, yours obediently,

FRANCIS STANLEY.

Lincolnshire, Nov. 21, 1842.