SOME PARTICULARS
OF
A CASE
IN WHICH THE PATIENT WAS SAVED FROM THE
DESTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE OF OPIUM,
BY
ARTIFICIAL RESPIRATION.

By CHARLES IRVING SMITH, Esq.,
ASSISTANT SURGEON IN THE MADRAS ARMY.

WITH PRECEDING REMARKS,
By JOHN HOWSHIP, Esq.,
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY, SURGEON TO THE CHARING
CROSS HOSPITAL, AND LECTURER ON SURGERY.

READ FEB. 9TH, 1856.

THE following is the outline of the case to which I referred, at the last meeting of the Society: a case in which the importance of artificial respiration, as an occasional means of saving, or even restoring life, is seen perhaps in its strongest and most striking point of view: a case which I have for some years been in the habit of mentioning in my lectures on surgery, in reference to the deleterious influence of opium; and one, the treatment of which reflects no less credit upon the humanity, than upon the professional talents and zeal of Mr. CHARLES SMITH, a gentleman then attending my lectures, who, having

the immediate care of the patient, kindly favoured me with the following account.

This case appears to possess several features of considerable interest. It demonstrates that where from the destructive influence of opium the attempts to excite vomiting fail, and where, by the assistance of the stomach pump, that organ has been cleared of its contents without relief; where, in short, the circulation, respiration, and temperature have so far declined, as to be scarcely perceptible, the keeping up for a time the action of the chest, by the most simple form of artificial respiration, may sustain the powers of vitality until, the deleterious influence of the poison being worn out and exhausted, the patient shews signs of returning consciousness and power, at length revives, and eventually recovers.

Jane H., (æt. 25,) a stout young woman, was brought into the St. Marylebone Infirmary, July 20, 1828, under the following circumstances.

At six in the morning, she was observed by one who slept in the same room, to swallow something from a cup, the remains of which was opium. She shortly after became insensible. At 10 A.M. she was brought in. At this time, her extremities were cold and livid; the lips and face of a dark lead colour, the pulse fluttering, and scarcely perceptible at the wrist. Respiring three or four times in a minute, with sighing.

The stomach pump was applied, and that organ was carefully washed out, first with water, then with

dilute acetic acid; after which, small quantities of ammonia were injected, combined with brandy. The spasm of the œsophagus was so great, on attempting to introduce the tube of the stomach pump, as nearly to destroy it.

The patient was now, (11 A.M.,) evidently worse than at the time of her admission; so much so, that many doubted if she still lived. The hair was next entirely cut off from the whole head, and the head placed over the edge of the bed, several buckets of cold water were poured in rapid succession over it; the nostrils being at the same time stimulated with volatile alkali. The pulse now intermitted much at the wrist, at one time being 70 or 80 beats in the minute, and the next sinking as low as 7 or 8. Respiration had now nearly ceased.

The scalp was now rubbed with the *Liq. Ammoniaë*, until the entire of it was vesicated.

11½ A.M., it was determined, as the only remaining chance, to try the effects of artificial respiration; there being at this time no pulse whatever at the wrist, and only a slight irregular action at the heart, indicative that life was not quite extinct.

The mouth and one nostril being closed, a pair of common bellows was applied to the other nostril, and the chest was in that way inflated, and alternately emptied by pressure on the chest and sides. This was continued for an hour, without intermission, at which time the heart seemed to be rallying, but if left to itself, it rapidly sunk again. An ounce of the

ol. Terebinth. was injected into the rectum. Bottles of hot water were applied to the chest, and sinapisms to the feet and legs.

The same treatment was continued till 2 P.M., with only very slight intermission. She was at this time so evidently rallying, that it was deemed safe to leave her.

She was again seen at 3 P.M., when she was found relapsing into her former state. Recourse was again immediately had to artificial respiration, which was continued till 5 P.M., at which time it was suspended, on account of the pulse having become regular, and her having made some slight attempts to move; and shewing evidence of pain on being pinched.

At 12 P.M., she became slightly sensible, and swallowed a little tea. She became eventually well; and has since married.

It was curious to see the effects of artificial respiration in this case. The livid colour of the face and extremities, rapidly giving way to a more florid hue, on every inflation, and again as rapidly returning to its original colour, on being left for a few minutes.