A CASE
OF
VIOLENT AND OBSTINATE COUGH,
CURED BY
A PREPARATION OF IRON.

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THE organ of respiration is so essential to animal life, that whatever tends to throw light upon its disorders, or their cure, is deserving of attention.— The following case, in which the lungs were most materially affected, if not the seat of the proximate cause of the disease, affords such decisive evidence of the efficacy of an active remedy; which is seldom employed, and generally counterindicated in pulmonary complaints, that I have thought it not undeserving of being communicated to the society.

Miss M. aged 42, unmarried, of a fair complexion, lax fibre, and slender make, has been accustomed to a sedentary life and the accommodations and indulgencies which easy circumstances afford, and which, in females more especially, generally impair the constitution. Miss M. from infancy has been liable to frequent pulmonary complaints characterized by cough, pains in the thorax, hoarseness, suppression of voice, and feverish symptoms. She has seldom expectorated much; but sometimes, though very rarely, the expectoration has been tinged with blood. She has been very subject to dyspeptic complaints also; such as want of appetite, flatulence, oppression after eating; and to a torpid action of the liver and bowels, being generally either constipated or purged. About eight years ago she had a confirmed jaundice, and her countenance is generally sallow. She is liable to frequent and severe head-ache, which is brought on by very slight causes of anxiety, fatigue, or any trifling irregularity in the natural functions. The menstrual discharge has been tolerably regular as to its period of coming on; but it is generally too copious, continues longer than it ought, and is succeeded by some degree of leucorrhœa.

The skin is pale and easily chilled with cold or flushed with heat; the extremities are generally cold; the muscles pale, flaccid, and weak, and the action of the heart and arteries, slow and feeble.

There are no external marks of scrophula either

in the subject of this case, or any of her relatives whom I have seen, and from the period of life which she has attained, and the frequent violent and long continued cough to which she has been subject, without any appearance of suppuration that can be traced, it may be presumed that the lungs are free from tubercles.

We find then, in this case, marks of debility and torpor, and consequently predisposition to disease in every function, without any appearance of malconformation or natural debility of structure, which might not be consistent with general health. In consequence of the preternatural debility induced by impure air, innutritious and stimulating food, mental irritation, want of exercise, and various irregularities, a majority of females in the higher classes of society in this metropolis, are always in a state of incipient disease. The nature of the disorder is determined by the existing cause, and the head, the lungs, the liver, the stomach, the intestines, or the uterus are equally predisposed to be its seat.

In the case on which we are now treating, all these viscera were frequently the seat of disease, and if the lungs were more violently affected than the rest, it may be attributed to the natural tenderness of that organ, to its constant exposure to the impurities and vicissitudes of the atmosphere, and to its peculiar connection with the skin, which in females

is very partially defended from cold and exposed to great vicissitudes. Repeated attacks had undoubtedly weakened this organ, and rendered it not only liable to be disordered by those causes which more immediately affect it, but to renew diseased action from sympathy with other diseased viscera.

From the influence of these causes, Miss M. had rarely been free from a cough for any considerable period, which, prior to my seeing her, had always been treated upon the antiphlogistic plan; was tedious in its duration, and frequently so much reduced her strength as to render it necessary for her to go into the country, where air and exercise restored her to a moderate share of health.

About ten weeks ago I was called in, when she was thought by her friends to be in an advanced state of consumption. She laboured under a very violent cough, in which the inspirations were deep, the expirations loud, the paroxysms of which were brought on by any slight movement of the body, any sudden agitation of mind, or change in the temperature of the air. They often continued till she was much exhausted, and were particularly frequent and long continued during the night. What was expectorated was inconsiderable in quantity, and appeared to be the natural mucus of the trachea and bronchiæ. She complained of soreness over the greatest part of the thorax, when quiescent, and of pain when she coughed, which was most violent

about the lower part of the sternum and ribs. It was not, however, so considerable or partial, or so corroborated by other circumstances as to warrant a conclusion of pleuritic inflammation. When the patient was perfectly quiet, the pulse was slow, not exceeding sixty; but on motion the breathing was easily hurried, and the pulse consequently accelerated. The tongue was generally moist during the day, and covered with a whitish mucus, and the mouth clammy. She was not much troubled with thirst. The appetite was very bad; the stomach disposed to nausea, the bowels torpid and irregular. The skin was generally chilly or flushed; but its heat was seldom considerable. The urine was neither high coloured nor scanty, and generally deposited a sediment, sometimes of a mucous, at others of a lateritious appearance. Her bulk and strength were both much reduced.

Previously to my seeing her, a plaster of Burgundy pitch, and a blister had been applied to the sternum. Balsam of tolu, and a preparation of squills had been employed, and she was then taking kali neutralized with lemon juice, antimonial wine and anodynes. Her diet consisted almost entirely of vegetable matter and barley water.

Being of opinion, when I first saw her, that a tonic medicine, which would only stimulate in a very moderate degree, would be of advantage, to improve the appetite and restore the strength, whilst an opiate

was employed to allay the cough, I prescribed a light infusion of quassia, with neutralized ammonia; an anodyne linctus to allay the cough when violent; and an opiate at bed-time. A few days afterwards I had recourse to ipecacuanha and squills with the former medicines, and a small proportion of animal food. The cough was but slightly alleviated, and the strength but little improved. I then had recourse to pills, consisting of ipecacuanha, benzoin, calcined zinc, and extract of hemlock, with a stronger infusion of quassia, and a more liberal allowance of animal food, with table beer. Some slight improvement in appetite and strength appeared to be gained by the use of these remedies, but none that was satisfactory; and the cough and pain in the chest were but little, if at all abated. Conceiving that the cough was very much of a spasmodic nature, and that there was no local affection, but such as was induced by the violent action of the lungs, I prescribed a mixture, containing a dram of tincture of opium, to be taken in twenty-four hours; this was persisted in for a few days, with little effect in lulling the cough, and rather a prejudicial effect upon the appetite and strength. Colombo, natron, and rhubarb combined, were afterwards tried, and with some advantage, and animal food, with table beer, and a small quantity of wine were taken, but the progress in the cure was by no means satisfactory, and some more efficient remedy appeared necessary.

Finding that no increase of pain had been in-

duced by the tonic remedies and nutritious diet that had been used; that the pulse was uniformly slow when not accelerated by coughing or motion; that the urine was not scanty or high coloured; that the skin was generally cool, and the extremities deficient in warmth; that every symptom denoted diminished vital action, I determined to have recourse to a preparation of iron. Three grains of vitriolated iron, with double that quantity of kali and myrrh, were given twice a day, and animal food and malt liquor, cocoa, jelly, and nutritious food used at the same time.

In a few days I had the pleasure of finding the cough abate, and the strength improve, and the quantity of vitriolated iron in each of the draughts was gradually increased to six grains. Under this course the pulse, which in a quiescent state was generally under sixty, increased to nearly seventy beats in a minute; the skin became more florid; the appetite improved, and the patient visibly gained in bulk as well as strength. The cough gradually diminished, and the pains in the chest disappeared; sleep returned, and in less than a month after taking this powerful remedy, she went into the country in a very satisfactory state of convalescence.

There are many complaints in the lungs, inducing violent coughing, in which tonics are usually employed with advantage. In catarrhal complaints, after the inflammatory stage has subsided, when the

irritation which produces coughing proceeds from an increased effusion of the natural mucus, owing to relaxation of the bronchial glands; in the humoral asthma and the tussis senilis, in which a similar relaxation and debility may be considered as the proximate cause of the disease; in abscesses of the lungs, where the waste of strength must be counteracted by whatever can preserve it; in all these cases tonics are undoubtedly useful, and preparations of iron have been given with advantage. In whooping-cough, when inflammatory symptoms do not exist, tonics are the most efficacious remedies. In sympathetic cough, arising from weakness and an increased secretion of mucus in the stomach; they are principally to be relied on, and iron is perhaps the most efficacious.

But in the case above stated, it will be admitted that great caution in using them was necessary. The patient, though not indicating consumption from malconformation or scrophula, or the period of life, was of a very delicate make; the vessels of a very thin texture. The lungs were in so irritable a state that coughing was excited by the slightest muscular motion or admission of cold air. The pain in the chest was very considerable on coughing, and a sense of tenderness and soreness generally present, and spitting of blood had occurred on former attacks. It could not be considered as a symptomatic cough, as no other complaint had preceded or accompanied it, to which it could be referred. The stomach,

though disordered, was not more so than it had often been with little or no cough; or than might be expected in a weak person, liable to dyspeptic complaints, and having its functions disturbed by the violent action of the neighbouring viscus, by disturbed rest, and the anodynes employed to allay the cough. The distinctive symptoms of a stomach cough, the power of deep inspiration, of muscular motion, long intermissions, the aggravation after eating, the deep and hollow sound were also absent.

We may therefore, I think, conclude that the lungs were the primary seat of the disease, independently of its being referred to cold, a common cause of catarrh; and that it was protracted by peculiar debility and irritability induced in that organ, which could not be removed without invigorating the whole frame.

But what are the symptoms which authorise the employment of iron in a cough in which there is pain, dyspnea, great irritability of the lungs, and very little increase in the frequency of inspiration? I incline to think that a slow pulse in a quiescent state, would sufficiently warrant it. This cannot subsist with active inflammation of the lungs, or perhaps of any other of the viscera, nor with considerable obstruction to the transmission of blood. The original constitution, habits of life, the moderate temperature of the skin, the previous and accompanying complaints, all indicated debility in

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the above case, and concurred in justifying a treatment which I hope future success will confirm.

The Lady has enjoyed good health since the treatment of her complaint, above stated, during a period of more than two years.