AN INSTANCE
OF
SPASMODIC AFFECTION

OF THE
TONGUE AND MOUTH,

SUCCESSFULLY TREATED;

By MR. JOHN MITCHELL,
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COMMUNICATED BY

ALEX. MARCET, M.D. F.R.S.

Read Jan. 19, 1813.

I WAS desired on Saturday, 19th Sept. 1812, to visit Mrs. Stokes, a servant of the Hon. Andrew Foley, residing near Newport, about four miles from Kington, who was supposed to have had a paralytic stroke. She had attained her fiftieth year, was the mother of one child, and the catamenia, though they had not disappeared, had become irregular, and diminished in quantity. I found her perfectly sensible, and from her account I learned, that she had this day been suddenly seized with an affection, in which, to use her own words, “ she

felt something drawing her tongue and mouth to the left side; it took her speech away, and her face shook very much." Upon inquiry I learnt that this attack had not deprived her of her understanding, nor had it been preceded by giddiness, loss of sight, pain in the head, or any other symptom denoting fulness of the vessels of the brain. She had perfect feeling in her upper and lower extremities, and did not appear to suffer any thing material about two hours after the attack, excepting that her speech was not quite so distinct as usual, and her mind much hurried, and under the impression of having experienced a paralytic seizure. Her pulse was good, being only a little quickened, and participating with her general disturbed feelings. Her tongue was furred, and she had been costive for some time past. She thought her stomach out of order, from the bitter disagreeable taste she felt in her mouth in the morning for some time previous to the attack.

Twelve ounces of blood were taken from the arm, and a blister was applied between the shoulders; a purgative mixture of infusion of senna and sulphat of magnesia was given every two hours, and one grain of emetic tartar administered in the first dose.

Monday, Sept. 21.—She feels better, but the "catchings" (to use her own expression) have continued to attack her frequently since I last saw her.

I was naturally led to inquire into the nature of these symptoms, and found that the sensation began in the root of her tongue, which she described as feeling hard like a bit of wood, and as being drawn strongly against the left side of the internal part of her mouth. The left side of the mouth she stated was also drawn and shook, but the shaking, after continuing a few seconds, subsided again. She urged me to stay with her, that I might have an opportunity of witnessing the complaint, which I did nearly an hour, but it did not return. All I could perceive was a continual twitching of the Occipito-Frontalis and Orbicularis Palpebrarum muscles. Tongue clean. Pulse 75. Five grains of calomel and six of rhubarb were given at bedtime: and a mixture of infusion of quassia, tincture of gentian, and subcarbonate of soda was directed to be taken every five hours; and a combination of tincture of lavender and foetid spirit of ammonia to be taken after every spasm.

Wednesday, Sept. 23.—She feels better to-day and is quite well, independent of the “catchings,” but complains much of their frequency and increase of strength. She had an attack while I was present. Her tongue was drawn forcibly in a curved direction towards the left upper molares, the teeth were clenched, and the lower lip much distorted, from being drawn forcibly down, and to one side, by a strong spasm in the left Depressor Anguli Oris, and Depressor Labii Inferioris muscles. It

continued some seconds, and gradually subsided. Her intellects remained clear during the paroxysm.

Seven grains of calomel were given at bedtime ; and a purgative draught the following morning. The foetid mixture was continued.

Friday, Sept. 25.—Her health is good. The spasms are stronger and return every twenty minutes, and her whole face and even her eyes are, in some degree, affected by them.

Ten grains of calomel were given at bedtime, and a strong purgative draught of jalap and scammony the next morning. A mixture of volatile tincture of valerian, tincture of assafoetida and tincture of castor, was given three times a day.

Monday, Sept. 28.—The spasms increase in strength and return every fifteen minutes. With the muscles of the face, those of the left side of the neck begin also to be affected ; she has frequent sighing, and spasmodic twitchings pierce from the Scrobiculus Cordis to the back, and dart into the chest.

An ounce and a half of the *Mistura Ferri Composita* was given evening and morning.

Thursday, Oct. 1.—The spasms are more frequent, and more generally affect the muscles of the

face and neck. The diaphragm and muscles about the chest also sympathise, and a numbness is felt running from the neck, down the left arm, to the thumb and forefinger.

No wound of any description has been inflicted on any part of the body lately ; nor for some months previous to the attack, that can be remembered.

The steel medicine is continued ; and twenty-five drops of tincture of opium, with the same quantity of foetid spirit of ammonia, are directed to be taken every night at bedtime, in camphor julep.

Saturday, Oct. 3.—The spasms were not so frequent during the night on which the first opiate was given, but now they return every ten minutes.

Sunday, Oct. 4.—No amendment, on the contrary all the symptoms are much increased ; the spasms return once in ten minutes, and now and then one spasm succeeds the other so rapidly, that an interval can scarce be perceived. The following are the feelings as expressed by the patient, and the appearances as observed by myself on this day.

Antecedent to the spasm, a sensation of lowness and sighing was felt in the præcordia, attended with acute darting pains, flying from the lower part

of the sternum to the spine, and perpendicularly up the chest till they reached the root of the tongue, which became rigid. A numbness is now experienced on the left side of the nose, and point of the chin : the whole tongue feels like a piece of hard wood, and its apex is drawn forcibly and laterally, in a curved direction upwards, and to the left side of the roof of the mouth. In succession, the left angle of the mouth becomes much opened and distorted, from a violent contraction of the left Depressor Anguli Oris, and Depressor Labii Inferioris, which shewed the teeth fast clenched ; all the muscles of the face are now thrown into a state of rigid distortion : the nose appears drawn to the left side, and the nostrils widely expanded ; the eyes are wide open, and the white part of them only is to be seen, the left being drawn forcibly to the outer and the right to the inner angle, and both immoveably fixed in their sockets. The Occipito-Frontalis and Corrugator Supercilii muscles partaking of the spasm, throw the forehead into numerous wrinkles, and the whole countenance by this time assumes the most ghastly and distorted grinning. With these appearances the head seems to be cringing from the weight of a burthen placed upon it, in consequence of the muscles of the neck drawing it round to the left shoulder, occasioning an appearance, as if the left ear and chin were about to recline on the point of it ; the left arm is rigidly extended, and a numbness is felt running from the neck down it, in a straight line to the thumb and

forefinger. The intellectual functions are undisturbed, and the actions of the heart and lungs are not impeded or varied during the continuance of the paroxysm. After continuing in this state about three minutes, during which time all the muscles of the head, face and neck are held in a state of rigidity, the complaint suffers a remission, which is observed by a rapid tremulous motion of all the muscles affected, in consequence of the gradual cessation of the spasmodic action, and the antagonist muscles regaining their usual equilibrium. The effect of this is a shaking of the arm and head, and all the features of the face appear incessantly and variously convulsed. The eyes have a rapid motion and varied strabismus, and the whole countenance displays the most violent conflict. At length tranquillity is restored, and the sufferer experiences a short respite from the painful stretching of all the parts, when only a slight soreness remains.

From the commencement to the present time, she has taken food and slept in the intervals; but the spasms have returned with precise exactness night and day according to the length of the various intermissions before stated.

It was suggested, in consultation, by Dr. Thomas* of Kington, that some local irritation on the

* Dr. Thomas informed me that many years ago, he saw a young man (with symptoms very much resembling those of the present

nerves of the mouth might produce the complaint. The teeth were examined, and though they did not ache, yet the whole of them situated on the upper and left side of the mouth, were in a decayed state, and highly sensible when touched with a probe. The two left incisores and the left cuspidatus were broken off, and the gums surrounding them were inflamed and irritable. A discharge of foetid matter issued from the decayed fangs, and which I found had several times come from the nose. The two bicuspides and the three molares were also carious. It was determined, for the present, to act upon these diseased parts, and to consider them as the source of the irritation. The second molaris was therefore extracted, and the spongy gums enveloping the fangs of the incisores and cuspidatus were freely scarified. Warm milk and water was directed to wash the mouth frequently, and a brisk purgative of infusion of senna and sulphat of magnesia was given the following morning.

Monday, Oct. 5.—The spasms do not return so frequently; they are not so strong, nor do they last so long.

The gums were again scarified, the tepid wash continued, and one grain of extract of henbane and ten of castor were given night and morning.

present case) whose face was attacked with spasms and the tongue thrust out of the mouth, cured by extracting a carious tooth.

Tuesday, Oct. 6.—The spasms continue as frequent as yesterday, but their violence and length of continuance is much abated.

The fang of the cuspidatus is extracted, the warm lotion and medicine as yesterday repeated.

Wednesday, Oct. 7.—The spasms are as yesterday. The fangs of the two bicuspidates were extracted. The warm lotion and medicine as yesterday repeated.

Thursday, Oct. 8.—The spasms return once in twenty minutes; sometimes there is an intermission of half an hour. They are not so strong, nor do they continue so long as usual.

The fangs of the two incisores were extracted and the gums freely scarified. The warm lotion was continued, and a liniment was rubbed upon the gums composed of a drachm of borax and an ounce of honey. The henbane and castor repeated.

Friday, Oct. 9.—The spasms are more frequent, but their violence has much subsided. The head is not drawn to the left shoulder; the eyes are less distorted; the darting pains in the direction of the diaphragm are trifling; and the muscles of the face are more tranquil, except the depressors of the left angle of the mouth; they still produce distortion.

The first molaris was extracted, and the local applications were repeated. Ten grains of musk and ten of calomel were given this night, and on the 10th; and ten grains of musk on each of the following mornings; an ounce and a half of decoction of bark and half a drachm of the powder were given three times a day.

Monday, Oct. 12.—The spasms return only once in an hour, and are very trifling, the muscles at the angle of the mouth being the only ones that are now affected. All medicines were discontinued.

Wednesday, Oct. 14.—The patient is quite well, a slight quivering only is to be observed in the Depressor Anguli Oris, once in two or three hours, and that in so slight a degree, as to escape observation, had not a gradual diminution, from the most violent spasms, to the present simple vibratory motion, been experienced.

Saturday, Oct. 17.—The patient has lost all spasmodic action.