ON THE
EFFECTS
OF LARGE DOSES OF OPIUM
IN A CASE OF
DIABETES MELLITUS;

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COMMUNICATED BY

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THE complaint was first noticed by the patient in October 1813, after living for a few days more freely than usual. An uncommon degree of thirst with an increased flow of urine, having the usual diabetic characters, were the first symptoms observed; to these a gradual failing of the strength, with a corresponding state of emaciation, succeeded, and the patient complained of pain in the region of the kidneys. His appetite was good, but it is not stated to have been particularly voracious. He became a patient in the Northampton Infirmary in January, 1814. He was cupped in the back and bled in the arm, without any other apparent

benefit than the removal of the pain in the loins ; and on the 10th of February, the particular practice, which it is the object of this communication to illustrate, was commenced. He began by taking only one grain of opium at bed-time ; but this dose was gradually increased, both in frequency and quantity, till the 1st of March, at which period the quantity of opium consumed in twenty-four hours, amounted to twenty-four grains, which dose he continued to take daily, divided in five or six portions, till the 12th of the same month, when he suddenly left the hospital, his health being considerably improved.

Very little inconvenience was felt from these large doses of opium so long continued. The pulse remained generally between sixty and seventy ; he was not particularly lethargic, his appetite continued good, and his bowels were not only moderately open, but he had, about every fourth day, rather a smart spontaneous purging. On the other hand, the advantages derived from the opium were very considerable ; the urine was gradually reduced from twenty-five pints in the twenty-four hours to seven ; and the thirst was proportionally diminished. Frequent perspirations were induced, and his strength and spirits were gradually improved. Within the last twelve days of his stay in the hospital, the quantity of opium last-mentioned was not farther increased, because there appeared to be no farther abatement of the dia-

betic symptoms; but having taken no opium at all on the last night he slept in the hospital, it was observed that the quantity of urine discharged, had been immediately doubled. In this amended state, he was discharged from the hospital, at his own particular desire, and has not been heard of since*.

During the whole of this treatment, the patient was allowed a full diet, with a moderate portion of meat and milk; but he was put under no restraint, as to vegetable food, of which he had also a regular daily allowance; so that this case exhibits a striking instance of the effects of large doses of opium in diabetes, independently of any other systematic mode of treatment.

* To the paper (of which this is but an abstract,) tables of the daily doses of opium, and of the quantities of drink and urine, with other collateral circumstances, were annexed, exhibiting a detailed view of the above results.