A CASE
OF
LOCKED JAW

CURED BY OIL OF TURPENTINE GIVEN AS A
CLYSTER.

By EDWARD PHILLIPS, M.D.

COMMUNICATED BY
DR. MERRIMAN.

Read November 8, 1814.

MISS S. æt. 20, of a very delicate and sensitive habit, and always much affected with the slightest mental irritation, was, in December last, while on a visit to her relations at Taunton, in Somersetshire, seized with a violent spasmodic affection of both legs, and a severe pain in the right side, which were supposed by her friends to have been occasioned by over exertion in dancing. As the convulsive paroxysms increased and became more general, the attendance of Dr. Kinglake was requested, and from that gentleman I have been informed that the case appeared to him to have been a decided instance of hysteric affection, of a very aggravated and protracted description; the

convulsive paroxysms were violent, recurred at short intervals, and were often of more than an hour's unremitted duration. In about a fortnight, the affection was subdued, as it was supposed, by the inspissated juice of hyoscyamus conjoined with vitriolated zinc, interposing a brisk cathartic operation every second or third day.

Miss S. soon after her recovery, returned to her family, at Charlton, near Andover, and was quite free from all the symptoms of her former attack, until July 20, when the spasms returned again with increased severity; but by the use of antispasmodics with opiates, and a strict attention to the state of the bowels, she was, in the course of three weeks, so far restored as to be able to ride out, though much debilitated, and scarcely able to put her feet on the ground.

On Monday night, August 22, I was, for the first time, requested by Mr. Poore, surgeon of this town, to see Miss S. whom I found, on my arrival, in strong and general convulsions; the jaw was firmly locked, the whole of the left side paralytic, and what heightened the sufferings of our patient, and made her case peculiarly distressing, were the frequent unavailing attempts to vomit, which generally succeeded any abatement of the spasm, accompanied with a strong convulsive effort to force the irritating matter through the nostrils. Notwithstanding her sight was so much affected that

she could not discern one friend from another, there was no alteration in the pupils of the eye, and from the steadiness of the pulse it did not appear that the action of the heart and arteries were much, if at all, disturbed by so serious a struggle. Upon inquiry, I found the jaw had been closed since the morning of the preceding day, and that all the other symptoms had become progressively worse from the commencement of the trismus. Previous to her last illness a tooth had been extracted, which enabled her attendants to give her some support occasionally through a quill. The catamenia had been somewhat irregular as to the time of their appearance, but no material change was observed in the quantity or quality.

In this deplorable state, I requested she might be put into a warm bath, and remain in it for about a quarter of an hour, and an enema with sulphate of magnesia and infusion of senna, was directed to be given after she came out of the bath.

The following morning, Tuesday 23d, we were informed that she felt much relieved when in the bath, and was very unwilling to be removed, though she had remained in it nearly half an hour. The spasms were not so violent, nor so frequent, and there was some mitigation of the sickness. The clyster was quickly returned, and the bowels had not been relieved. She made signs for pen, ink,

and paper, and informed us that she had an acute pain in the right side near the region of the liver, and upon examination I found that she could not bear the slightest pressure. Leeches were ordered to be applied to the side, and a draught of magnesia vitriolata in infusion of roses was directed to be given every three hours, during the absence of sickness, until a copious evacuation could be procured; the warm bath to be used again in the evening; pulse not disturbed; the jaw still firmly closed.

Wednesday morning, 24th, no material alteration of the general symptoms since yesterday, except an abatement of the pain in the side. As the motion from the bowels this morning was very inconsiderable, a powder of calomel and scammony, containing eight grains of the former and a scruple of the latter, was mixed in a little honey, and by degrees sucked through the aperture made by the extracted tooth. On calling again in the evening, we found her labouring under a convulsive paroxysm of a more serious description than any one we had before seen her in, and I proposed to my friend Mr. Poore, that blood should be taken from the arm, which was immediately done to the extent of ten ounces, and there was an obvious relief afforded by this depletion. A draught with fifty drops of laudanum was ordered to be given at bed-time, and a warm plaster to be applied to the stomach.

Thursday, 25th, our patient slept a great part of the night, and the spasms were considerably diminished both in frequency and force, yet there was a distressing return of the sickness, and not the slightest relaxation of the jaw. She informed us, by writing on a slate, that she had a violent pain in her head, and expressed a wish that leeches might be applied to the temples, which was acceded to. As the calomel and scammony had procured but a scanty stool, I ordered the same powder to be repeated, and requested that every attempt should be made to get down a little barley water and dissolved jelly. No feeling or motion in the left side, and she had not passed her urine for the last twenty-four hours.

Friday morning, 26th, the bowels had been very fully opened in the night, and she had sucked down the barley water and jelly with greater ease than she had done since the commencement of her illness. The spasms were also less frequent and severe, and there had been no return of sickness since yesterday evening, which encouraged us to hope that the disease had been partly subdued. This apparent amendment, however, was but a prelude to a return of all the symptoms in their most aggravated form, which took place about seven in the evening, when my attendance was requested with as little delay as possible. On entering the room, I found Miss S. in strong and frequent spasms; the abdominal muscles were

particularly affected, and the muscles of the face also partook of the general conflict ; syncope came on, and the pulse was weak, rapid, and intermitting. The sickness returned, and was almost incessant, and tired nature seemed nearly exhausted under such accumulated sufferings.

I immediately desired that a clyster might be thrown up with some force from a syringe, composed of half an ounce of the oil of turpentine, rubbed down with the yolk of an egg, in eight ounces of infusion of senna ; and as Mr. Poore arrived just as the clyster was brought, we agreed to wait and see the effect it might produce. In about five minutes after the enema was given, we were in a hurried manner called by Miss S.'s mother to go into the bed-room, and to our great joy and surprise we found our patient sitting up in the bed smiling, the jaw was completely unlocked, and she with great complacency thanked us for the great and almost instantaneous relief we had afforded her. She was able to move the left arm and leg, and there was a total subsidence of the disease and its attending bad symptoms. A glass of wine was given to her, which she drank without any difficulty. As it was late, I requested that she might be kept as quiet as possible, and her friends were prohibited from holding any unnecessary conversation with her.

Saturday, 27th, she had slept almost the whole of the night, and had taken a little toast and tea for breakfast. She was cheerful, and conversed with the greatest ease. About six in the morning she had a copious stool of healthy appearance, in which was a small worm, and this was the first that had been ever observed by her mother during the period of her daughter's life. Finding her going on so well, we declined at present giving medicines in any form, lest they should produce a return of the sickness ; and she was directed to take mild nutritious diet, in small quantities, frequently in the day.

I now became anxious to learn from my patient some particulars of her own feelings during the operation of the clyster. It appears that almost immediately after it was given, she felt a glow of heat accompanied with a prickling sensation, first in the calfs of both legs, pursuing the course of the spine up to the neck, and afterwards to the head and face ; the room then appeared to her to be full of smoke, and the jaw instantly fell. To her mother and two young ladies present there was a visible change in the countenance, which led the two latter to retire from the bed-side, under the impression that she was dying.

Sunday, 28th, I called with Mr. Poore, and found her much better in every respect, and it was agreed that a due evacuation of the bowels should

be particularly attended to. She was ordered to begin taking twice a day, a draught with the muriated tincture of iron in some bitter infusion. Under this treatment, with no variation worth mentioning, this young lady is gradually recovering her strength, and has not had the slightest return of her former complaints. She recovers the use of her legs but slowly, yet with some assistance she is able to ride out and visit her friends.

The foregoing case becomes, I conceive, both interesting and important from the sudden and simultaneous removal of a most formidable disease, attended with a train of symptoms of unusual severity and duration ; and I think we may conclude from the narrative given, that this was decidedly effected by the use of the turpentine clyster.

I will not at present intrude upon the Society any hypothesis which I may have formed of the disease itself, as well as the practice so successfully adopted ; but I must add, that the whole plan of treatment pursued was the result of much previous reasoning and careful deduction.