A CASE
OF
TETANUS
OF NEARLY
FOURTEEN MONTHS' DURATION.

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WILLIAM L—, æt. 36, a strong fisherman, but with hereditary hæmorrhagic tendency, was attacked in the autumn of 1859 with violent spasms of the muscles of the neck. About two months before the symptoms began, he had been kicked on the back of the neck during a quarrel. No permanent trace of that or of any other injury remained visible. He was then troubled with a violent paroxysmal cough. Early in the month of December one of the paroxysms ceased suddenly, and at the same time the head was thrown backwards with a repeated spasmodic contraction of the muscles, and great pain in the hinder part of the neck. From this time the cough disappeared, but the spasmodic action of the muscles gradually extended over the back and arms.

The attacks of spasm were intermittent, with at most an

interval of half an hour between them day or night. They awoke him from sleep, and prevented his ever obtaining any continuous repose. They sometimes commenced with a slight dry cough, which served as a warning to his friends to attend upon him. His head was then suddenly drawn backward and to the left, with a repeated jerking motion, and the arms were moved with a twitching, or a more violent spasmodic, action. His whole features were dragged backwards, his eyes fixed, the lids being widely open, and his teeth clenched. He seemed to breathe with difficulty, and referred the hindrance to his respiration to the top of his sternum. A little froth sometimes collected on his lips, and he moaned as from pain. He never lost consciousness during these attacks. After the symptoms had continued for some time, their violence lessened, the muscles slowly relaxed, the muscular pain subsided, but a "dreadful" occipital headache sometimes continued for a minute or two. In the intervals he was quite at ease, but always in a perspiration, and always careful of any considerable effort, which appeared to him to bring on the attacks. Thus, he did not walk alone. He could masticate and swallow readily. He spoke of "music in his ears," but had no flashes of light in his eyes. He did not lose intelligence, or present any other symptom of disease of the cerebrum. He had no hiccup.

For many weeks the power of walking was retained, with assistance in steadying the head and neck, but as the spasm became more violent and general, the man was obliged to take to his bed. There he remained for two or three months, without much variation in the ordinary symptoms of opisthotonos. The curvature of the back was extreme, and while the spasm of the muscles of the neck and arms was interrupted and jerking, that of the muscles of the back was continuous during the whole period of each attack. Then there came on an utter impossibility to keep on his back, and, being in great dread of the recumbent posture occasioning or increasing the violence of the spasms, he continued for five weeks kneeling by the side

of the bed, and resting his head and shoulders upon it. Again he was obliged to lie in bed. Almost incessant jactitation of the limbs, sometimes all together, sometimes of the arms and legs by turns, was now added to the ordinary tetanic symptoms, and this was generally made more furious and irregular by the first few inspirations of chloroform. In this state, with frequent change of the chief seat of spasmodic action, and with such occasional intermission of the violence of the symptoms as almost to induce a hope of recovery, the year 1860 passed away. Eating and drinking, especially meat, porter, and wine, with which he was liberally supplied, always kept him quiet for a time, and fortunately his appetite seldom failed. Grasping the rail at the head of the bed, raising or briskly rubbing his arms, would also sometimes ward off the spasm for a while. Mastication had the same effect, and he constantly kept a piece of wood between his teeth, as biting it relieved the spasm.

Early in January, 1861, however, he found that he was gradually becoming less able to maintain any control over himself by these means, and that the remedies in constant use were losing their effect. About the 10th of that month he presented all the symptoms of the most severe form of opisthotonos, and on the 16th, without emaciation, and without paralysis, he died during a paroxysm.

Every kind of treatment was tried in turn. The first, after moderate purgation, was that by aconite. The full effect of this drug was soon produced; but as the pulse fell, the symptoms became worse. Chloroform was then used, and for a long time with relief for hours after the inhalation of one or two drachms. So long as the drowsiness continued, he remained free from an attack, but he was usually aroused by a spasm of more than average severity. Ether had a similar, but not so marked, an influence. Active clearance of the bowels with turpentine and castor oil was followed by a few days of ease. No suggestion of a remedial measure was neglected, and it would be useless to go beyond the mere enumeration of galvanism, counter-irritation, narcotics, stimulants, and antispasmodics of all kinds of repute.

It was, however, found that nothing held the disease in check so well as chloroform, till, at length, upon its occasional failure, and the bad effects of sedatives given by the mouth becoming evident in the loss of appetite and increased irritability, hypodermic injection of morphia was had recourse to, two or three times daily. This for a little while acted like a charm, and the man regained strength and flesh. At last, however, more than fifteen grains of morphia and several ounces of chloroform, used daily, only gave short intervals of quiet. During the week preceding the man's death it was found necessary to let him inhale chloroform almost incessantly, and more than a pint disappeared every twelve hours.

The head and upper part of the cord only were examined. The blood was fluid. The brain was small, firm, and injected, but not diseased. There were several spots of effused blood on the cord, and a flattened clot, not recent, about the size of a sixpence, was found on the front of its cervical portion, opposite the body of the fifth vertebra.