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Illustrations

OF

HOSPITAL PRACTICE:

METROPOLITAN AND PROVINCIAL.

SALOP INFIRMARY.

EFFECTS OF SACCHARINE DIET IN DIABETES.

By Edward BURD, M.B. and L.M.Cantab., Physician to the Infirmary.

Just at the present time, when there is some discussion and much difference of opinion, as to the effects of a saccharine treatment of diabetes, the following case may not be uninteresting. I will merely give a few of the principal details, which touch more particularly on the point at issue.

M. M., aged 30, married, came under my care in the Salop Infirmary, on November 14th, 1857, suffering from diabetes mellitus in an advanced stage. She is one of a healthy family, and resides in a healthy village in North Wales, where she has been under regular medical attendance for some months. She is extremely emaciated, and in a very weak and depressed state, both of mind and body. She has had nine children, and says that she was quite well up to the period of her last confinement, ten months ago, at which she had considerable hæmorrhage, causing great weakness and prostration, which rendered her unable to nurse her child. She has menstruated twice since her confinement, but not during the last seven months, from which period she dates her illness, and from which she has been known to be suffering from diabetes, and has been treated accordingly. The disease has, however, steadily progressed in spite of remedies. On her admission, she weighed seventy-nine pounds, and was passing six quarts of urine in twenty-four hours, of specific gravity 1036. I ordered her to take two pints of milk and two pints of porter daily, with sick diet and no medicine. This plan she continued for a week, seemingly somewhat improved by the liberality of her diet; and on November 22nd (a week after her admission), I determined to try the effects of a saccharine treatment. She was ordered to go on with the sick diet, milk, and porter, and to take half a pound of honey and half a pound of white sugar daily. She rather liked the idea of this novel treatment, and commenced it willingly.

From the very first commencement, however, she became daily worse in every way; the pulse, before very quick, became quicker; the thirst more urgent; the tongue more dry; the urine increased both in quantity and in specific gravity. Sickness came on; and the bowels became very relaxed. She lost all desire for food; had restless, bad nights; and her debility became extreme—so much so, that her evacuations were passed involuntarily: and I entertained great fears that she would rapidly sink. These untoward symptoms were met, as they arose, by appropriate remedies, but in vain; and at the end of a week, it was found necessary to stop the supply of sugar. The quantity of the urine had during the week risen from six quarts *per diem* to twelve; the diarrhœa at the same time being excessive. Under the free use of opium and stimulants (the sugar being omitted), she rapidly improved, and in the course of another week was able again to get up and to walk about her ward, the urine having again reduced to six quarts.

REMARKS. Had this saccharine treatment been continued in this case for a few days longer, the woman would inevitably have died, and died from the effects of the treatment. Happily, such an event did not happen, and she is spared; though to drag on a miserable existence, and sooner or later to become the victim of a protracted disease, having barely escaped immolation on the altar of experiment.

ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.

I. EPILEPSY: ARACHNITIS.

[Communicated by G. GODDARD ROGERS, M.D., Medical Registrar.]

C. O., aged 35, a shoemaker, had a fit a week ago when in the street. It was preceded by giddiness and swimming in the head, and left him unconscious for an hour; those who witnessed it say that he struggled violently. In two days he was better; but in the course of another eight and forty hours violent pain attacked the back of his head, and of this he complained when admitted on the 30th of November. His wife stated that he had also been suffering from pain in the left ear; and (with a view of applying counterirritation, I suppose) she had poured brandy and cayenne pepper into it!

His tongue was somewhat coated with a brown fur; pulse 100, and weak; the pupils were dilated, and he saw almost everything double. His skin was moist; the urine was high-coloured and acid, with a specific gravity of 1034, and loaded with albumen. Under the microscope it exhibited an abundance of well marked semitransparent granular casts of all sizes. He made some complaint of the urine scalding him when voided. A dose of calomel and senna, followed by lotions to the head and a blister to the neck, was the treatment employed. On the following day a mixture containing ammonia was given. The pain in the head appeared most severe quite at the lowest part of the occipital region.

December 2nd. In the forenoon he was delirious. Great dilatation of the pupils was noticed, and a peculiar rapid oscillatory movement of both eyeballs, together with some rigidity of the muscles at the back of the neck. At night he was violent and much exhausted, in consequence of the repeated attempts he made to leave his bed. Towards early morning he lay quiet, but groaned as if in great suffering, and the nurse reported that he died "very hard."

The body was examined twelve hours afterwards. The vessels of the pia mater were much congested. The dura mater and arachnoid cavity were natural. There was a considerable deposit of lymph mixed with pus in the subarachnoid tissue at the vertex of the brain on both sides of the longitudinal fissure, and at the base in the subarachnoid space corresponding to the third ventricle. The cavities of the lateral, third, and fourth ventricles were full of turbid fluid mixed with lymph, and their lining membrane was very vascular. The septum lucidum, fornix, and central structures were softened. The kidneys and liver were healthy. The other organs were not examined.

II. PLEURITIC EFFUSION: PNEUMOTHORAX: PARACENTESIS: DEATH.

[Communicated by G. G. ROGERS, M.D., Medical Registrar.]

H. C., aged 30, a potman, was admitted on November 19th, suffering from cough and dyspnœa. He stated that a fortnight before he was chilled by going out in the rain; that severe cold and cough followed, and that the night before his admission he was attacked with sharp pain in the right side. His breathing was very short and hurried; the heart's action increased; the pulse 116, full, and rather sharp and hard; the skin was hot; and he was afraid to cough or expectorate. Turpentine epithems were applied, and calomel and opium given three times a-day. Over the back of the left lung, at its lower part, was some dulness on percussion and fine crepitation. On the right side on succussion a loud splashing was heard.

November 20th. His face was very blue; there was the same urgent dyspnœa, and he lay constantly on his back.

November 22nd. He was extremely weak; and towards evening he became so exhausted that it appeared unlikely he would survive the night. This condition of prostration recurred the following evening, and was succeeded by long-continued delirium. In the morning he was calmer, but breathed with very great difficulty; and he remained much the same