Illustrations OF HOSPITAL PRACTICE: METROPOLITAN AND PROVINCIAL.

ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL.

CASE OF DIABETES TREATED BY THE USE OF THE
TURKISH BATH.

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WM. SPENCE, aged 21, farm-labourer, was admitted into Luke's Ward, on February 10th, 1863. He had been ill five months, from his own account. He complained of great and increasing debility, so that he was obliged to give up work, becoming very much emaciated, and having intense thirst. The skin was dry and harsh. He passed large quantities of urine. He had good appetite; no cough. The chest was well developed and healthy. Pulse 84, feeble. The tongue was coated with dirty mucus, brown in the centre, and very red at the apex and edges. He had no headache; no recollection of a blow on the head or accident; nor had he suffered from other illness.

The emaciation and debility were excessive, so that he appeared to take little notice of what was passing about him; and roused himself with difficulty to answer questions. The specific gravity of the urine was 1041; the quantity as yet was not determined.

On admission, he had a warm bath; and his hair was cut close. He was ordered five grains of calomel and five grains of Dover's powder at night, and a senna draught in the morning; a drachm of sulphate of magnesia in peppermint-water three times a day. The urine, being measured, was found to be thirteen pints.

Feb. 21st. The quantity of urine was fifteen pints; specific gravity, 1043. He left off his medicine, and was ordered a Turkish bath on alternate days.

Feb. 25th. The amount of urine was ten pints; specific gravity, 1041. The diet of this patient was determined at this date as follows:—Mixed diet—Twelve ounces of bread, and three-fourths of an ounce of butter; one pint of tea with milk (no sugar) for breakfast; and the same for tea; milk, with rice- or bread-pudding. Alternately for dinner—Half-pints of milk; four ounces of roast meat when dressed, without bone. Extras—Greens; half a pound of beefsteak; a pint of porter; two eggs; and an unlimited supply of water, lemonade, and other hospital drinks.

March 4th. Urine of specific gravity, 1040; quantity under ten pints.

March 11th. Urine of specific gravity, 1037; quantity under ten pints. He was very much more alive and cheerful, and increasing in strength.

March 14th. Urine of specific gravity, 1030; quantity under ten pints.

March 21st. Urine of specific gravity, 1037; quantity under nine pints.

April 1st. Urine of specific gravity, 1027; quantity under eight pints.

April 4th. Urine of specific gravity, 1030; quantity under seven pints.

The specific gravity was less after coming from the bath.

April 8th. Urine of specific gravity, 1031; quantity under seven pints and a half.

April 18th. Urine—specific gravity of two portions, taken at different times in the day, 1041 and 1030; total

quantity, under seven pints and a half. He had been taking some sweetmeats, which accounted for the higher specific gravity.

April 25th. Urine of specific gravity, 1030; quantity under seven pints.

May 6th. Urine of specific gravity, 1030; quantity under six pints.

May 13th. Urine of specific gravity, 1031; quantity under five pints and a half.

The bath was omitted.

May 20th. Urine of specific gravity, 1032; quantity under six pints.

May 30th. Urine of specific gravity, 1032; quantity under six pints.

June 3rd. Urine of specific gravity, 1035; quantity under five pints.

The bath was now resumed.

June 6th. Urine of specific gravity, 1030; quantity under five pints.

June 13th. Urine of specific gravity, 1030; quantity under five pints.

The pepsine was discontinued.

June 27th. Urine of specific gravity, 1031; quantity under five pints.

July 1st. Urine of specific gravity, 1028; quantity under five pints.

July 15th. Urine of specific gravity, 1030; quantity under five pints.

July 18th. Urine of specific gravity, 1028; quantity under five pints.

Gluten-bread was ordered as a substitute for hospital bread.

July 22nd. Urine of specific gravity, 1033; quantity under five pints.

July 29th. Urine of specific gravity, 1035; quantity under five pints.

Since taking the gluten-bread, he has suffered much dyspepsia; and shows more sugar in urine.

I will not offer any remarks upon this case, beyond the fact that it is uncomplicated with remedies. Although not cured, and still under treatment, it shows that, in this particular instance at least, the bath is as powerful a remedial agent as any that we have tried.

The sweat has been several times tested, and there is not a trace of sugar in it; but the usual quantity of urea and chloride of sodium; differing not at all from the results given in the perspiration of healthy persons.

The skin has become soft and perspiring. He has increased in weight and muscular development; so that he has become capable of doing good work, and makes himself useful in the hospital. He is a very cheerful and intelligent man for his station; in strong contrast to his first appearance.

I was induced to try the Turkish bath in this, which I considered a hopeless case, because I had heard of a case (not very well authenticated) which had been relieved at one of the public baths. I was satisfied that, with proper care, very debilitated patients may be subjected to it without any fear; and having the patients under our own control, we could stop them at any time. And, moreover, a number of cases (seven) of albuminuria with dropsy, and in some cases with heart-disease, have been subjected to the Turkish bath; without any inconvenience in any one case. Four of these cases have got entirely rid of albumen in the urine. All the cases have been relieved of the dropsy. When I have other cases of diabetes in the hospital (and I shall be glad to receive any, if sent from any part of the country by medical practitioners) I will report progress.

Since the above report, the quantity is reduced to four pints, and specific gravity from 1022 to 1030; and this improvement followed the application of ice to the cervical vertebra in an India-rubber bag, as suggested by Dr. Chapman.