ON
THE TREATMENT OF HALLUCINATIONS
BY
DATURA STRAMONIUM.

By M. J. MOREAU,

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BEFORE entering on the treatment of hallucinations with *datura stramonium*, M. Moreau lays down certain distinctions which exist between the different forms of hallucination.

1. The hallucination may be simple, i.e. not complicated with any other disorder of the intellectual faculties; the patients are conscious of the delusion under which they labour. This species is frequently met with in lunatic asylums.

2. They are complicated with various disorders of the intellect, especially with forms of monomania; the hallucinations precede these latter, which they excite and keep up.

3. In other cases, they appear to be a consequence, not an exciting cause, of the mental derangement, and then are merely one of the symptoms of madness.

In the two first forms we may hope to obtain a cure; but in the last it is very doubtful if we can effect one; for, although the hallucinations may be removed, the mental derangement continues, and sooner or later causes them to reappear; this is still more certain when they are connected with *dementia*.

M. Moreau has treated eleven cases of hallucination with the *datura*; in eight cases the disorder was primary; these were all cured; in three it was secondary, or complicated with *dementia*; here the treatment failed. The cases related by M. Moreau are divided into three series, according to the quantity of *datura* administered. In the first three the dose was moderate, but gradually augmented. The following are examples:—

CASE I.—Emanuel P—, 31 years of age, is of morose disposition, and excessively timid; none of his family have been deranged; he attributes his present malady to grief. Two months back he was seized with insomnia, palpitations and pains in the head, which seemed to arise as if from blows; the least thing excited terror in him; in a few days afterwards, hallucinations of vision, hearing, and general sensibility, supervened. During the night, and often during the day, he fancies that he hears unknown voices upbraiding him; on one occasion a voice called loudly in his ear, “I am your father, whom you killed with grief; don’t you recognize me?” at the moment he thought he saw the ghost of his father, who died a few years back, standing close to the bed. When received into hospital on the 3rd of December, 1840, he continued to labour under the same delusions. He was immediately ordered to take the extract of *datura*, twenty grains, night and morning. During the first two or three days he complained of some giddiness and disturbance of the sight; his sleep was disturbed by dreams, such as he never before remembered to have had. The occurrence of the latter frightened the patient extremely; he dreaded to lose his intellect altogether, and was persuaded with great difficulty to continue the medicine. Gradually his sleep be-

came more calm; the dreams and hallucinations disappeared; the patient was more cheerful, and betook himself actively to the labours of the farm; still, however, he remained apathetic, and this perversion of the moral faculties did not disappear until March 1841, when he was completely restored to a sense of his situation, and begged earnestly to be discharged; finally, he was dismissed well on the 19th of May, 1841.

REMARKS.

The patient whose case has been just described, was under the care of M. Moreau, from the time of his admission into Bicêtre to his discharge from the farm at St. Anne. His general health never suffered in the slightest degree, and it was only on questioning him closely that he acknowledged the hallucinations under which he laboured. The duration of the complaint, and the threatening of insanity, were circumstances of a very unfavourable nature, yet the patient was restored to his natural state after a month’s treatment.

CASE II.—Louis R., labourer, had suffered, in the year 1839, under certain symptoms of mental disorder; violent grief had driven him to the use of spirituous liquors. One night, while sleeping in the same room with several other fellow-workmen, he thought that he heard numerous voices issuing from different parts of the chamber; the voices accused him of different crimes, and told him that his right hand would be cut off; the man, alarmed, sat up in his bed, and was astonished to see all his comrades sleeping quietly around him. He lay down again, and immediately noticed a strong ringing in the ears, and heard the voice more distinctly. On awakening his comrades, and finding that they had noticed nothing extraordinary, he thought, to use his own expression, that he must be completely “cracked.”

During five months he was tormented with the same voices, but continued his ordinary occupations, and the former gradually ceased.

In the month of December, 1840, he was again attacked in a similar manner, although he had given up drinking for a length of time; he now committed so many acts of extravagance that he was sent by the police authorities to Bicêtre; when removed thence to St. Anne, the hallucinations continued with the same force and frequency.

On the 27th January he took a mixture, containing five grains of the extract of *stramonium*; he felt some uneasiness about the throat after taking it, with general shivering: he slept soundly, however, and heard no noise during the night.

28. Complaints of singing in the ears; heard the voice in the evening when about to sleep; was troubled with dreams.

29. This morning he came and said that he was better, but would fall back into his old state unless he had another mixture. His request was granted; the medicine produced the same effects as before, singing in the ears, and suspension of the hallucinations.

February 2. During the last three days the patient has been free from hallucinations; last night, however, he was again attacked; ordered six grains of the extract.

3. From this period the patient has remained completely free from all mental delusion; he was

discharged from hospital on the 26th of March. More than a year afterwards M. Moreau met him, and was assured that he continued to enjoy perfect health.

CASE III.—A young patient, shortly after his admission into hospital, handed to M. Moreau a letter, the following extract from which sufficiently explains the nature of his delusions. "Give me my liberty at once, that I may pursue my object, and destroy all the kings of this earth. My earnest desire is to regenerate the human race, and I am destined to die at the head of a powerful republic. From the age of eight years upwards I have always resolved, like Romulus, to build a city in my native forest of Lorraine. For the last twenty years, heavenly voices announce to me the most curious particulars concerning the kings of the earth and my change at nurse."

This patient had been formerly an inmate of the hospital, but the symptoms of insanity were not very strongly marked, and the medical men were divided in their opinions on his case; at present he is in a constant state of excitement; the whole day he is occupied in corresponding with the king, Prince Metternich, and the Pope; when he is sent to work on the farm, he is constantly looking up at the clouds, where he fancies that he sees miraculous symbols, legions of armed men, &c.

This patient remained at Bicêtre during a month without receiving any benefit; ten days after his removal to the farm, M. Moreau gave him two grains of stramonium daily: at first he complained of constriction about the throat, and weight on the head; there was some somnolence; he slept more tranquilly, and was less excited, but the delusions continued unabated. Towards the end of January, (the patient had now been seventeen days under treatment,) the delusions returned under a new form, but again gradually disappeared, and the mental excitement was completely removed. The patient continued the use of stramonium in the doses already indicated, when an accident changed the face of affairs altogether. Being convinced himself, from his improved condition, that he required no more medicine, M. M., instead of taking his pills night and morning, suspended their use, without acquainting the physician, and then swallowed five (ten grains) together. Two hours afterwards he was seized with nausea, vomiting, pricking in the eyes, constriction at the throat, and a dreadful sense of weight in the head; vision was disturbed, and there was a violent ringing in the ears; he experienced alternately a feeling of great heat and cold in the limbs, which were affected with trembling. These symptoms of poisoning continued for some time, and when they began to subside, the patient had a succession of the most extravagant ideas; towards evening, however, nothing remained but a sense of weakness in the lower extremities. On the following morning he was found perfectly quiet, and free from delusion. "I had doubted hitherto," said he, "the power of medicine, but, after what I have just felt, I shall never doubt again."

From this period the state of the patient's mind continued most satisfactory, and for the last three months he has been perfectly well.

In another case, the symptoms of mental derangement occurred in a person subject to epi-

lepsy, and were evidently excited by the fits of that disease. Here, also, the patient accidentally swallowed a strong dose (twelve grains) of stramonium, exhibited for several hours symptoms of poisoning, and was completely free from delusion on the following morning. A month afterwards the premonitory signs of epilepsy manifested themselves, and the patient became insane; he was given one grain of the extract of stramonium every half hour; after the ninth dose symptoms of poisoning appeared; the patient lay in a state of deep stupor for an hour and a half. Here, also, as soon as the poisonous effects of the drug disappeared, the patient was restored to reason, and has not suffered a relapse for three months.

It is unnecessary to transcribe the other cases related in this interesting memoir; we shall therefore conclude with the closing remarks of the author.

The principal facts deducible from the preceding observations are as follows:—

1. Of ten persons labouring under mental delusions, and presenting several unfavourable circumstances, *seven* were completely cured, *one* much relieved, and *two* resisted the action of stramonium.

2. In the first eight cases the delusions had preceded the other symptoms of insanity, but in the latter two, the reverse was the case.

3. The duration of the disease had been two, three, six, and nine months; two years in one case; two patients had accesses which lasted for several months.

4. In the different cases a cure was obtained in four, seven, and thirty days, with moderate doses; in five, eight, and fifteen days, with large doses; and in twenty-four hours with poisonous doses.

5. The period of convalescence had extended, at the time of writing the memoir, to two, three, and four months.

Before concluding, we may ask what effects we may expect from the use of stramonium in cases of hallucination connected with chronic mania or chronic monomania?

The author does not possess facts to enable him to answer this question. Cases of chronic mania and monomania, uncomplicated with dementia, are excessively rare; in the chronic wards at Bicêtre, where one hundred patients are confined, there is only one, with regard to the state of whose moral faculties some doubt remains.

Theoretically speaking, the success seems probable; the cures already obtained with stramonium in acute cases appear to justify the hope that it may exercise a beneficial effect on cases where the delusions were primary, and constitute the chief element of the mental disorder.—*Gazette Médicale*, No. 43.

ABSORPTION OF PUS IN SMALL-POX.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

GENTLEMEN,—A re-perusal of Dr. Symonds' comprehensive and interesting retrospective address of July 1839, particularly that part of it detailing the researches of Dr. Mandl, Mr. Gulliver, and Dr. Davy, relative to the existence of pus