CASE
OF
RUPTURE OF THE RIGHT VENTRICLE OF
THE HEART.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL
JOURNAL.

GENTLEMEN,—As I have learned that one of your correspondents has contributed a case of rupture of the heart to the pages of your useful periodical, I beg to send you the following, which may, perhaps, be worthy of insertion :—

Sept. 25, 1840. I was summoned in haste, at eleven, p.m., to the housekeeper of an eminent goldsmith in Bond-street; but she died before I arrived. The next day I examined the body, and found the following morbid appearances :—

Head.—Dura mater vascular, and excessively adherent to skull; more fluid than usual in the ventricles; the base of the brain softened.

Chest.—The pericardium quite distended with blood; this, on minute examination, was found to have issued from a perforation of the right ventricle of the heart, close to the apex, and near the septum; the perforation was scarcely the size of a crow-quill; at first sight it looked like a little spot of ecchymosis; it readily admitted a probe into the cavity of the ventricle. The muscular substance around it was neither discolored nor softened, and there was no disease of the great vessels.

During the afternoon and evening preceding her death she complained of great faintness; she had also been sick, and said she felt a load at her chest, as if there were something there which wanted to come up. She retired to bed about ten minutes before eleven, and a servant, who entered the room a few minutes afterwards, found her quite dead, and leaning over the edge of the bed, as if in the act of vomiting.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN CHALLICE.

2, Southwick-crescent, Hyde-park,
Nov. 4, 1843.

CASE OF POISONING
BY THE
BICHLORIDE OF MERCURY.
RECOVERY OF THE PATIENT.

COMMUNICATED BY

E. MORRIS, Esq., Surgeon, Spalding.

On Sunday afternoon, the 15th of October, I received a hasty summons to visit Mrs. A., aged twenty-three years, the wife of a veterinary surgeon, to whom she had been married about three weeks, and was informed that she had taken a quantity of corrosive sublimate.

Upon my arrival at her residence I was told by the husband that he was mixing medicine, and had four powders upon the table containing half a drachm of the bichloride of mercury in each; she took one of them up, and emptied the contents of it into her mouth, and swallowed some of it, and the remainder she spat out again; she then drank some water immediately.

This occurred about a quarter after four, p.m. I

saw her for the first time five-and-twenty minutes afterwards; she informed me that she was very unhappy in her mind, and that she had taken it with the intention of destroying herself, and did not at all regret having done so; she was sitting in a chair, with a basin upon her knee, into which the saliva was continually running. The countenance was flushed, and she was much excited; she complained of a burning sensation in her mouth, œsophagus, and stomach; the mucous membrane of the mouth and fauces, particularly about the lips, was quite white, and rough to the feel; she had great thirst, and felt rather sick; the pulse was full, and only 40 in the minute; the hands and feet were cold.

I gave her the whites of four eggs mixed with a little water, which she immediately swallowed. About ten minutes after she had taken it, she vomited repeatedly and freely, and completely emptied the stomach. After the sickness had abated I gave her the whites of several more eggs, which she kept down; I then ordered bottles of hot water to the feet, and left her at six o'clock, ordering her a mixture containing castor oil suspended in mucilage, and directing that two tablespoonfuls should be taken every half-hour, until the bowels were relieved.

At eight o'clock, p.m., I again saw her; she said that the burning heat in the mouth, throat, and stomach, were much worse; she now complained of a darting pain through the chest, and also of an acute pain in the right iliac fossa about the caput coli; the lips were very much swollen, and the saliva flowed abundantly from the mouth; the breath was very foetid; the pulse very small, and 29 in the minute, and intermitted about every ten beats, during the time it would take for two pulsations; there had not been any more sickness; the extremities were very cold. As she sat in her chair, her head nodded as if she was about to go to sleep, and every now and then her arms were suddenly jerked up; she said her legs felt benumbed; she had a heavy feeling in the head; the pupils were dilated, and she was very drowsy, and never spoke unless spoken to; the breathing was very slow, and frequently interrupted with deep sighing; she had passed but little urine, and when she did so said it scalded her very much.

About ten o'clock I again visited her; she appeared much the same; the bowels had not been moved; I desired them to continue giving the mixture until a satisfactory evacuation was produced.

Monday, Oct. 16, at Eight, a.m. The husband called upon me, and said that she was much better in every respect.

At eleven, a.m., I saw her; the bowels had been well relieved in the night, and the motions contained a small quantity of blood; the pulse was 89; the pain in the side was quite gone; her throat and stomach, she said, were very sore. Upon examining the mouth, the mucous membrane lining the lips and underneath the tongue were found corroded, and in a state of ulceration; she had still much pain when she made water. I ordered a gargle, containing the solution of chloride of lime, and a mucilaginous mixture, to be taken every four hours.

Nine, p.m. She is much better, with the exception of her mouth, which pains her very much.

Oct. 17. Pulse 86; complains of pain in the head

and back; she does not now suffer from pain when she passes her water; the bowels have not been again relieved.

18. She has had relief from the bowels, and says she feels much better, and in good spirits; she continued gradually to improve after this, and is now quite well.

Although in the above case the symptoms were violent, and the patient's sufferings very great, I do not believe that many grains of the poison entered the stomach. She emptied the contents of one of the powders, which contained half a drachm of the bichloride of mercury, into her mouth; it acted powerfully upon the mucous membrane, wherever it came in contact with it, and produced ulceration within the lower lip, and underneath the tongue. The first quantity of the white of egg which I gave her, after remaining down a few minutes, was forcibly rejected. This was fortunate, for whatever poison had reached the stomach, and had become mixed with the food, must have been thrown up. The saliva flowed abundantly from the mouth, and the lips were swollen; this was not occasioned by salivation, but by the violent action of the poison locally upon the mucous membrane. The poison had a remarkable effect upon the pulse, which at one time was under 30 in the minute, and intermitted very much; she complained also of great drowsiness. Dr. Christison, in his work on Poisons, mentions this drowsiness and slowness of the pulse, but does not state that it ever intermits. The following passage commences the section upon the symptoms of poisoning with mercury:—"The effects of mercury on the animal body are more diversified than those of any other poison. It acts on a great number of important organs, and in consequence the phenomena of its action are proportionately various. It is not surprising, therefore, that some ambiguity still prevails as to its mode of action, and the circumstances by which it is regulated."

CASE

OF

SLOW POISONING BY ARSENIC.

By R. JONES, Esq., Strefford, near Shrewsbury.

Oct. 20, 1843.—Miss B., of spare habit and pale complexion, has been subject to an obstinate diarrhoea for the last six weeks, and has now the following symptoms:—Frequent griping pain in the bowels, with almost constant desire to act; considerable tenderness over the whole abdomen, which is distended; constant pain and nausea after taking food, and frequent vomiting of all ingesta; the skin cool and dry; intense thirst; tongue clean and red, resembling raw beef; the pulse is 100, small, and feeble; there is a sense of constriction of the throat, and a copious flow of saliva; she has some gastric cough, and frequent raking of the throat and fauces, of a muco-purulent secretion, mixed with specks of blood. There is much pain and tenderness down the spine, and frequent muscular tremors; a crampy feeling of the lower extremities, with partial loss of motion and sensation; they are much swollen, of a livid color in places, and showing a tendency to slough; there is great emaciation; she is unable to procure sleep,

owing in some measure to the frequent action of the bowels; the motions are white, watery, and frothy; urine scanty, high colored, and passed with an effort; catamenia absent. She informed me she has been subject to a chronic disease of the skin (psoriasis guttata) for the last four years, and that after having recourse to a great variety of means for its removal, including the local application of sulphur in all its forms, she consulted a physician at Hereford, who prescribed "the liquor arsenicalis." This at first gave her a month's respite, after which the complaint returned in an aggravated form; she again consulted the same physician, who advised her to resume the remedy in five drop doses, to be gradually increased to fifteen drops, three times a-day. On this occasion she took it for about a month, "sometimes taking rather more, sometimes less," until the above train of symptoms set in, without, however, any benefit to the disease.

The above is, undoubtedly, a case of slow poisoning by arsenic, but I treated it as an aggravated form of "gastro-enterite." She was directed to use a warm bath every other day, to take a farinaceous diet, with a little chicken or veal broth; to allay the thirst with linseed tea and barley-water; to keep in bed. A blister was applied over the region of the liver, and the abdomen, spine, and lower extremities, rubbed twice daily with camphorated oil and laudanum; mild mercurials were of service in restoring action to the liver, and opiates in allaying pain and irritation. All her worst symptoms have now left her, but there is still great prostration, and she has still a feeling of numbness in the lower extremities. She is taking at present liquor potassæ, and decoction of bark.

Strefford, Nov. 9, 1843.

SOME REMARKS

ON THE

PRODUCTION OF SULPHURETTED HYDROGEN GAS IN THE ALIMENTARY CANAL,

AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE SYSTEM.

By J. BOWER HARRISON, M.R.C.S.L., &c.,
Surgeon to the Ardwick and Ancoats Dispensary.

[For the *Provincial Medical Journal*.]

We may almost pardon the zeal and exclusiveness with which that accomplished surgeon, Mr. Abernethy, regarded the disorders of the digestive organs, when we come to consider how many derangements originate in these parts. When we further reflect how many secondary conditions of disease proceed from imperfect digestion, and how greatly our remedial measures are directed to improve this function, we are still more impressed with the paramount importance of the subject. It must always be borne in mind that the stomach and bowels are the immediate recipients of our medicines, and that most of the changes we are desirous to produce can only be effected through the mediation of these parts. Disorders of the digestive organs have thus properly drawn the attention of several able inquirers, but it is still to be regretted that many different affections pass without sufficient discrimination under the common denomination of dyspepsia.

Of the food which is taken into the stomach, a certain portion is received as nourishment, and the