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ON THE THERAPEUTIC POWERS OF THE IODIDE OF POTASSIUM.

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There is perhaps no period in the history of our profession, in which so many important additions have been made to the therapeutic department of medicine, as the present century; and of those additions, the discovery of iodine is not the least important.

It is remarkable that, whilst most of the others have been the result of the inductive powers of chemical science, iodine should have been discovered by accident, as was the fact in 1812, by M. Courtois, of Paris.

By the agency of this elementary body and its combinations, it is indisputable that an immense amount of human disease and suffering has been remedied—enough indeed to justify the inference, that what appeared to be discovered by accident, was in reality pointed out by the finger of a gracious Providence for the benefit of mankind.

On the present occasion it is my intention to state my own experience of the curative efficacy of one of the preparations of iodine, viz., of the iodide of potassium.

I am conscious that much—very much—has been already written on behalf of this extraordinary medicine, by various able writers of our own and other countries; yet, notwithstanding, I consider the testimony about to be offered as too important to be withheld; and, moreover, I hope to adduce evidence of its curative power in other diseases, in the treatment of which it had never been previously employed.

I shall first state those diseases, in which, though it appeared to be indicated, it entirely failed; secondly, those in which it was successfully employed; and thirdly, those in which it had not been before administered, but where it proved to be of essential benefit.

The diseases of the first class consisted of abdominal tumours, scirrhus induration, and ulcerated carcinoma, lupus, indurated glands, and scrophulous ulceration, lesions of the respiratory organs, enlargement of the liver, ascites, and encysted dropsy.

It is no uncommon occurrence in females, towards the termination of the catamenia, to meet with immense sarcomatous and scirrhus tumours of the abdomen, occupying almost the whole of the hypogastric region; and it is quite astonishing how long they often carry them about without much disturbance of the general health. In many of these cases I have used the iodide, both internally and externally, and

also other preparations of iodine, without any apparent benefit.

In two cases of that horrid disease, cancerous ulceration at the side of the root of the tongue, it entirely failed to arrest the fatal progress of the malady.

In a case of lupus or noli me tangere, where the cartilaginous structure of the nose was eaten off home to the bones, it was equally unsuccessful.

In lesions of the lungs, especially where there were ulcerated cavities in the pulmonary tissue, it has never been attended, in my hands at least, with any decided benefit: on the contrary, from its having occasioned diarrhoea, or otherwise excited the system, I have been often obliged to lay it aside.

From my own experience of iodine generally in pulmonary disease, I am of opinion that, in whatever preparation it may be given or applied, it will never triumph over this malady.

In several cases of enlarged liver, in which the increase of bulk was very perceptible, I have given the iodide a long trial, but without its having had any observable effect upon the morbid dimensions.

It has also been reported to be of great use in peritoneal dropsy; but I regret to say that my own experience does not confirm that testimony. I have employed the iodide many times, both in peritoneal and encysted dropsy, without its having in any degree increased the action either of the absorbent or the renal function.

We are not, however, to be surprised at its negative power in the above diseases, as most, if not all of them, consisted of, or resulted from, organic lesion; and we know it to be an allowed fact in pathology, that when any part of the body has passed into organic or structural change, it cannot be medicinally cured.

In scrophula also I have employed this medicine very extensively, both in glandular enlargement, and in its ulcerated stage. The result does not justify me in recommending the iodide as a remedy of any efficacy in this disease. In the case of a female, aged 20, where an immense crowd of indurated glands had for a long time completely disfigured both sides of the neck, I had hoped for some proof of its efficacy, but in spite of its having been steadily taken for several months, no visible diminution was effected. Some years afterwards they gradually yielded to the continued use of the compound iron pill.

The diseases of the second class, in which I have found the iodide of potassium to be attended with

success, are phagedænic ulceration, periosteal disease, and chronic rheumatism.

PHAGEDÆNIC ULCERATION.

CASE I.

J. R., aged 38, by occupation a ferryman, in the spring of 1837, came from a distance of four miles to consult me for sore throat and difficulty of breathing. His respiration was stridulous and laborious, and he appeared as if struggling in the advanced stage of croup. On examining the internal fauces, I found the soft palate and tonsil-glands involved in extensive ulceration, which was also fast destroying the mucous membrane of the larynx, and threatening asphyxia. It appeared that the disease of the throat had existed for some months before it assumed its present alarming character. Almost despairing of any success I ordered the following treatment:—

Iodide of potassium. . . . . $\frac{1}{2}$ drachm
Tincture of orange peel . . . $\frac{1}{2}$ fluidounce
Syrup of ginger . . . . . $\frac{1}{2}$ fluidounce
Water . . . . . 5 fluidounces

Take half a fluidounce diluted with mint water three times a day, and wash the throat frequently with the following gargle:—

Solution of chloride of calcium . $\frac{1}{2}$ fluidounce
Honey of roses . . . . . $\frac{1}{2}$ fluidounce
Water . . . . . 5 fluidounces

I requested to see him again in a few days, if he were well enough to come in; at the same time fearing he could not long survive so much laryngæal mischief. I was however most agreeably surprised to see him at the end of a week, in every respect better than could have been imagined after so short a trial of the iodide. The condition of the throat was very much improved, and his breathing tranquil and free; in short the medicine had, as it were, snatched him from imminent danger, and already placed him in comparative safety. The same treatment was continued for some weeks longer, when his throat was healed; and he left my care convalescent.

After this I lost sight of him till the spring of 1839, when he requested the favour of my going to see him at his own home. I found him in a truly pitiable condition. He was in his bed, which he had kept for eight months, worn out with severe rheumatic pain, exhausted with intestinal hæmorrhage, pale, atrophied, and cachectic. He had been all the winter under the care of a medical gentleman, who had endeavoured in vain to relieve him.

Reflecting on the character of his former symptoms, and inferring that he was under the influence of the same disease, I at once put him under the iodine treatment that had been so successful before, adding to each dose of the iodide a few drops of the tincture of opium. In a few days his pains were relieved, and he began to rally; in three weeks he came down stairs, and in a few weeks afterwards paid me a visit, and represented himself well.

I saw this man on the 5th of March, in the present year, in the enjoyment of *full health*, five years having elapsed since his last attack.

CASE II.

W. P., a young man, a labourer by occupation, consulted me for a disease of the tongue, which had withstood every remedy brought against it for seven

months. The tongue was swollen throughout for about an inch and half from its point. The tumefaction was of a pale red colour, relaxed and flabby, and almost honey-combed with small deep ulcers. It was extremely painful, producing a copious flow of saliva, and preventing all mastication. His general health was low, but without febrile disturbance.

I gave him five grains of the iodide three times a day, with five grains of blue pill every other night. At the end of a week the tongue was less swollen and less painful, and had assumed a healthier appearance. In a fortnight afterwards he had gained considerable ground for the better, the ulcers were healing, he could masticate his food, and his general health was much improved; from this time he convalesced rapidly, and at the expiration of seven weeks he needed no further treatment.

CASE III.

J. B., worker at a foundry, and aged 20, applied for advice on account of a large indolent phagedænic ulcer in the left groin, which had existed for six months, and had been preceded by a sore on the glans penis. The existing ulcer was wide at its upper part, the edges of which were loose, notched, and overlapping, having a livid hue, and no power of cicatrization. Its surface was foul, covered with a layer of yellow lardaceous matter, and discharging a thin bloody ichor, having the sickly smell so peculiar to this kind of phagedæna. As the ulcer descended between the scrotum and thigh it became narrower, and assumed the form of a deep rhagas or cleft, which extended as low as the perinæum. His general health was debilitated, but undisturbed by fever.

Five grains of the iodide of potassium were ordered in solution three times a day, with five grains of blue pill every other night, and as generous a diet as he could afford.

In a fortnight it was manifest that the treatment had begun to take effect; and it was most interesting to observe the improvement of the sore. The overlapping edges were no longer lying loose and unconnected, but were united to the surface beneath, whilst their margins had become less livid, and had commenced the cicatrizing process. Suffice it to state, that by a continuance of this treatment his general health was restored, and the ulcer cicatrized in three months.

Within the last few years I have seen two other phagedænic ulcers of the groin of a similar character, both of which were treated with the iodide, and with the same result in about a similar period. In one of these no blue pill was administered.

PERIOSTEAL DISEASE.

CASE I.

J. C., aged 40, a baker by trade, consulted me for an agonizing pain of a rheumatic character in the right tibia, which was considerably enlarged, and its periosteum thickened along the upper half of its anterior and inner surface. The pain had existed for *eight years*; it attacked him every night as soon as he was warm in bed, and had in a great measure long deprived him of sleep.

He is a married man; and solemnly assures me that he has contracted no syphilitic disease for the last twenty years, when he had a swelling of the groin.

He told me that he had spent in vain almost all he possessed in medical advice, and had been once in a hospital with no better success; that he could bear his sufferings no longer; and, that in the event of my treatment being also unsuccessful, he had decided on submitting to amputation as a last resource.

I at once put him under the use of the iodide, of which he took five grains in solution three times a day, and continued the treatment for six weeks: at the end of a week the pains left him and never returned; the enlargement of the tibia diminished, and he speedily recovered.

CASE II.

A medical gentleman, about 40 years of age, of dark hair and pale complexion, had been for several years tormented with severe aching pains of the limbs from a morbid condition of the periosteum. The disease was seated principally on the lower third of the right femur, where there was considerable nodosity with much tenderness; so severe was the pain, that he was under the necessity of taking large doses of opium every night to procure sleep, and enable him to perform the duties of his profession.

The long continuance of the disease had seriously injured his health, and reduced him to so great a state of debility and emaciation, as to cause alarm for the result, especially as peritoneal dropsy and anasarca of the legs had taken place, and as the urine was found to be albuminous.

Every remedy that could be suggested by his medical brethren, was tried to relieve him—mercury, sarsaparilla, di-sulphate of quinine, the sesqui-oxide of iron, the arsenite of potass in solution, the vinum colchici, &c., had each its fair trial; the veratrine, and also the belladonna, had been rubbed in externally, but all to no purpose: the dropsical symptoms had however been removed by the bi-tartrate of potass.

At this period of the disease, and early in the summer of 1837, I strongly urged him to try the iodide of potassium. Previously to his following my advice, by the persuasion of a professional friend, he took the iodide of iron, but without any marked advantage. He then commenced the hydriodate of potass in five grain doses three times a day.

In about a fortnight he was conscious of having derived decided benefit, which encouraged him to persist regularly in the treatment. The result was his pains gradually left him; the nodosities were absorbed, his sleep returned without the use of opium, his appetite improved, his breath lost the mercurial fœtor, he gained flesh, and in a few months was convalescent. I had opportunities of seeing this gentleman a long time after this, and his disease had not returned; on the contrary, he appeared to enjoy confirmed health.

CASE III.

James Powell, aged 42, was admitted into the Southampton Dispensary in June 1837. He had a periosteal thickening on the internal surface of the lower third of the right tibia, upon which there was a small ulcer of long standing, and a node, the size of the long half of a lemon, upon the centre of the sternum.

He stated that the disease of the leg had existed since 1835; that it was extremely painful, frequently confining him to his bed for days together; and that the enlargement of the sternum commenced about

a month prior to his admission into the dispensary; that it interrupted his breathing, prevented his lying down, and caused a sense of painful pressure on the chest. His general health was considerably weakened. I at once ordered him the iodide three times a day, in the usual dose of five grains, without any other medicine. In a fortnight his breathing was relieved, the pain of the sternum and leg subsided, and at the end of August, about two months from the time of his admission, the ulcer was healed, the periosteal deposits absorbed, and he was discharged cured.

Powell has since applied to me at lengthening intervals for slight returns of the disease, which a few weeks use of the iodide has never failed to subdue.

CASE IV.

Jane Flower was born in 1828, and her parents report that soon after her birth she had a snuffling and a discharge of thin fluid from the nose, which continued about six months. After this she appeared quite well, and continued to thrive till 1833, five years after her birth, when she became gradually deaf, and, in a short time, having forgotten the words she had learnt, dumb also.

At this period several of the glands of the neck were enlarged, and a swelling appeared on her forehead. The same morbid action showed itself in the nose, and soon extended to the palate. The result was—the exfoliation of the palate processes of the palatine bones, the giving way of the septum narium, and the falling in of the nasal roof. The child drew out the exfoliated palate bones, in September, 1833. At this time the upper and inner surface of the right tibia became diseased, throwing off several portions of dead bone. Ulceration took place in five different parts of the scalp; and from each ulcer lamina of the outer table of the cranium were exfoliated. The superior maxilla also was implicated in the same disease, which occasioned the loss of many of her teeth.

For these afflicting circumstances the poor child was admitted into the Southampton Dispensary, in 1834. Being at this period unacquainted with the efficacy of the iodide, I prescribed the decoction of bark with muriatic acid, and afterwards the bi-chloride of mercury with sarsaparilla, which gradually subdued the disease, and she was discharged apparently cured.

Eight months afterwards, she was re-admitted for the same disease, which had again broken out on several parts of the scalp and tibia. She had lost her appetite and her constitution was cachectic.

She was placed under the same treatment—the bi-chloride and sarsaparilla, which again gradually subdued the disease, and she was discharged apparently well.

After about the same interval she was re-admitted the third time, and I then had an opportunity of placing her under the therapeutic power of the iodide of potassium. It was given in the following form:

Iodide of potassium . . .	18 grains
Syrup of ginger . . .	$\frac{1}{2}$ fluidounce
Peppermint water . . .	$5\frac{1}{2}$ fluidounces

Two table spoonfuls three times a day.

After having persisted in this treatment ten days, her health began to improve, and the ulcers to assume a better appearance. From this time her convalescence

progressed rapidly, and at the end of six weeks she was again discharged.

From this period I lost sight of the case for two years, when, being informed that she resided in the neighbourhood, I called on her in order to ascertain if her health were established.

To my great disappointment I found that the disease had returned with great aggravation. The scalp was ulcerated at different places, and presented one mass of filth; there was a large ill-conditioned ulcer on the same part of the head of the tibia; an ulcer on the inner surface of the right upper arm, and another over the right scapula, from most of which there had been exfoliations of bone.

The mother had now given up all expectation of the disease being cured; but at my urgent request she came once more into the dispensary; when she was again put under a course of the iodide of potassium in four grain doses three times a day. Unwilling to prolong the history of this interesting case, suffice it to say that, at the end of three months, this formidable disease—hydra-headed as it had proved—was completely subdued; after having existed, off and on, for ten years. Since then her general appearance has astonishingly improved. She has been sent for instruction to the Deaf and Dumb Institution in London. She is now sixteen years of age, in the enjoyment of good health, without a remaining symptom of the disease—never I hope to return.

CASE V.

A field-officer of the Indian army, aged 56, had been resident in the Madras presidency twenty three years. During this period he had suffered attacks of the jungle-fever and inflammation of the liver, for the cure of which he had been under the necessity of taking scruple doses of calomel every two hours. From these causes, and from constantly superintending the formation of a grand military road, under a scorching sun, his health gave way, which obliged him to go to the Neilgherries and mountainous district of Madras. In 1827 he returned to England, and spent the following six years in touring through the united kingdom for his health, but without benefit. I shall now proceed nearly in his own statement:—

"In 1833, I was attacked with a rash over the scrotum, groins, and lower part of the belly; and a curious sore appeared on the glans penis; which inflamed, spread rapidly, and threatened the destruction of the part. I was attended by two able surgeons, and at the following Christmas was reported well, when I proceeded to London. A few weeks afterwards a fresh sore (not syphilitic) appeared on the cicatrix, which spread rapidly. By the aid of good surgical advice I was in the course of time again set right. In the autumn of 1834 a large abscess formed on the back of my left thigh. It was opened by an incision, which ulcerated extensively, exposing an immense cavity. This occasioned much alarm; but by taking 12 grains of the quinine daily for some weeks my general health improved, the ulceration was checked, and the cavity considerably though not entirely filled up. In May, 1835, I was removed to Hampsted, where I remained many months much under the same circumstances—the sore sometimes healing, sometimes spreading, now allowing me to walk out an hour, then shutting me up

for a week. At this period the disease broke out and suppurated on different parts of my body, for which I drank 12 bottles of De Verno's syrup without any perceptible benefit. At length, in February, 1836, all the sores had nearly healed, and I returned to London, where, from the effects of influenza, my local miseries were renewed and my constitution reduced to great debility and emaciation. In September I went to Cheltenham. There, by a new local mode of treatment my sores were almost healed in seven weeks, but my bodily health was daily failing me, and now, for the first time, I was attacked with pains resembling rheumatism affecting my head, neck, and lower part of the left thigh. The pain was so severe as to deprive me of all sleep. On the 9th of November I went to Bath, where I found no relief. On the contrary, my health more and more declined, and my sufferings became so intense that I was at times in a state of distraction and apprehensive of losing my mind."

On the 1st of January, 1838, he came to Southampton and placed himself under my care. I found him on his sofa, weak, pale, atrophied, and suffering intense pain in the bones of the head and lower third of the left femur, the periosteum of which was thickened and painful under pressure. On the upper and right side of the os frontis there was an ulcer exposing the bone; and on its upper and left side there were two small nodes. The ulcer on the upper part of the thigh had cicatrized.

As he had no fever I gave him at once five grains of the iodide of potassium thrice a day, desiring him to continue his usual opiate (30 drops of Batley's sedative) every night.

At the end of the first week his sufferings were sensibly relieved; by the end of the third, the pain of the head and thigh was subdued, his appetite improved, and his strength greatly restored. At this juncture unfortunately, from inaction of the liver and kidneys, infiltration into the peritoneal cavity, and cellular tissue of the lower extremities took place, which obliged me to suspend the iodide for other remedies. I did not feel justified in giving him mercury, as his maladies had been attributed to the excessive use of this medicine. On the 25th of January I ordered two drachms of the bi-tartrate of potass every morning, which had the happiest effect in restoring the hepatic and renal functions, and removing the infiltration.

In the latter end of February, as the pain began to return, I ordered him to resume his iodide; but as it disagreed and occasioned an unpleasant bitterness in the throat, I thought fit to suspend it again for a while. The pain, however, continued, and so increased in severity, that on the 6th of March it was resumed in the following form:—

Iodide of potassium	. . . . .	48 grains.
Syrup of ginger	. . . . .	$\frac{1}{2}$ a fluidounce
Tincture of digitalis	. . . . .	1 fluidrachm
Peppermint water	. . . . .	5 $\frac{1}{2}$ fluidounces

Take half a fluidounce in a little water thrice a day.

Under this treatment, steadily observed, he soon became free from pain, improved rapidly in every respect, and in a few weeks could walk out at his pleasure. On the fourteenth of May the iodide was discontinued, and he returned to London in good health and spirits.

(To be continued in our next.)