CASE OF PLACENTA PRÆVIA; EXTRACTION OF THE PLACENTA BEFORE THE CHILD.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

SIR,

The following case may be interesting to the younger members of our profession, and as it has been satisfactory to me, after reflecting on discussions lately arising on the management of "placenta prævia," you will, if you think it worthy, give it room in your Journal when convenient.

On Tuesday last, the 24th of the month, I was called to Susanna Newton, aged 25, pregnant for the fourth time. At ten a.m. I found the patient had been alarmed by a copious *show* without labour-pains. I directed her to bed, and on examination found the vagina and uterus little prepared for labour. She was kept quiet and cool, and I heard no more of her till three a.m. of the following day, when I went to her in haste. A profuse flooding had occurred, with slight pains; I introduced my hand slowly, and with some difficulty, into the vagina, and found the os uteri dilated to the size of a crown-piece, and a portion of the placenta lower than the head of the child. I deliberated, without suffering my hand to retreat, on what plan I should proceed. The os was thick, and not dilatable, offering great difficulty to passing the hand and reaching the feet of the child. I had almost determined to administer a full opiate, and wait till there would be safety in the older practice, when, on a sudden, a frightful gush of blood produced syncope, and spreading my fingers open between the walls of the uterus and placenta, I detached the latter with a sweeping motion of the hand, when a strong pain almost instantly expelled it and my hand into the vagina. The hæmorrhage from this moment *ceased*, and in an hour moderately energetic pains expelled a seven months' dead child.

It was gratifying to me, that without tedium and exhaustion to the poor woman, the case was so quickly ended, and I do not remember a single instance in my own practice where I was so fortunate as to preserve the *life* of the *child* in such like cases. A brother of mine, now deceased, going to the assistance of a female midwife, found the placenta in the bed, and the woman recovering from her danger. This was to him, at his time of day, inexplicable, and has often been related to men of experience, exciting only their incredulity. I need hardly add, that but for the interest lately evinced by some of the contributors of papers for your Journal, on the subject of unavoidable hæmorrhage, I dared not have adopted the foregoing practice.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

T. GARNEYS WALES.

Downham, Norfolk, March 27, 1846.

CUMBERLAND INFIRMARY, CARLISLE.

TWO CASES OF HEMERALOPIA, OCCURRING IN COTTON-SPINNERS.

Communicated by W.B. PAGE, Surgeon to the Infirmary.

John M., aged 15, a "piecer," in a cotton factory, was admitted into the Cumberland Infirmary, August 31st, with hemeralopia, or night-blindness. His occupation consists in constantly carefully watching an

extended surface of white cotton threads passing before him, in order that he may join those which become broken in this part of the process of cotton-spinning.

He states that about five months since, he first observed, that "when he went out of a night it looked cloudy," and this cloudiness gradually increased in density until a short time before his admission, when he had become quite unable to see anything after the commencement of the evening. During the whole of the day he was able to see perfectly well, but so soon as it began to get dusk, his power of vision was altogether lost; but on a bright light being brought near his eyes, he was able to distinguish objects tolerably clearly. His general health seemed to be unaffected, and his eyes presented no appearance of any organic lesion.

Five grains of blue pill were ordered to be given every night, and half a drachm of sesqui-oxide of iron three times a day.

Another patient in the same ward was desired to notice at what time of each evening his blindness commenced, and at the end of the first week his report was, that he had gained about half an hour at night, and that he could see earlier in the morning than before.

On the 14th of September, the end of the second week, but little further improvement was observable, he was able at night to see objects with a less amount of light than at his admission, but he still became quite blind, when the candle was removed to another part of the ward.

He was ordered to continue the carbonate of iron, and to take a five-grain blue pill night and morning.

18th. A very marked improvement had taken place, a small amount of light being sufficient to enable him to see with tolerable clearness.

21st. The gums were slightly affected with the mercury. He was able last night to see during the dusk as well as any other person; he was therefore ordered to discontinue all medicine.

28th. During the last week he has continued to see perfectly, and was therefore discharged this day.

CASE II.

William M., aged 14, a "piecer" in a cotton factory, was admitted into the Cumberland Infirmary, November 2nd, with hemeralopia. His history and symptoms were precisely similar to those of the former case; the same treatment was adopted, and with a like result, the amendment being very decided from the time the system became under the influence of the mercury. He was discharged cured November 30th.

This disease, though frequent among sailors, and others exposed to the glare of the sun in tropical and arctic regions, is but rarely met with arising in this country; and although these two cases occurred within so short an interval, I have neither met with, nor heard of, any similar case among the vast number of persons employed in a like occupation in this neighbourhood. The amaurotic condition in these cases undoubtedly resulted from the continued excitement of the organ of vision, from the minute inspection of the cotton threads in constant motion, and the undue stimulus to which it was exposed from the whiteness of the surface, and appeared to be altogether independent of any functional derangement of the digestive

or other organs. Arising, as it did, in youths employed for many hours daily in a heated factory, with the constitutional powers rather below than above par, it was deemed advisable to support the general tone of the system, and at the same time to administer mercury in moderate and repeated doses, with a view of relieving that morbid condition of the retina which had rendered it insensible to its appropriate stimulus. Had these means failed, it was resolved to employ counter-irritation, and to abstract blood locally, so as to lessen that congestive or inflammatory condition of the internal tunics of the eye, which might exist, without diminishing the powers of the patient. These measures, however, were not found to be necessary, the disease yielding without interruption to the internal remedies employed; the efficacy of the mercury in both cases being most decided.

PROVINCIAL

Medical & Surgical Journal.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 1846.

He who succeeds in organizing the medical profession on a wide and enduring basis, will rank with the wisest legislators and greatest benefactors of mankind. Such is the conclusion at which the writer of an able article in the last number of the *Westminster Review* has arrived in the course of an extended examination of various essays, reports, bills, and enactments, relating to medical police and the constitution of the medical profession. We have no intention of following the author in the course which he has taken, though some points on which he has touched will probably form the subject of remark on some future occasion. It is sufficient for our present purpose to show that the conclusion is a correct one, and that, consequently, when the present Home Secretary, discouraged by difficulties—many of which it should be observed, were of his own making, and the result of an imperfect and partial acquaintance with the subject, shrank from the responsibility—he relinquished an opportunity of working out a great benefit to the community, and establishing for himself a lasting claim upon public gratitude.

We hear much in these days of divers interests—the agricultural—the manufacturing—the mercantile, and others of less extent and importance,—of various means for the advancement or protection of these several interests;—of rights vested in one or other of them, and of rights inherent in opposing parties. All and each of these interests are made the subject of discussion, of keen contest, and, as being of national importance, of legislation; and correctly so, for where the interests of large numbers of the subjects of a state are concerned, it is manifestly the duty of a wise government to foster and protect them, and where they are opposed to each other, so to regulate them upon principles

of justice and equity, as shall conduce to the general benefit.

But what among these interests can compare, either in importance or extent, with the general and individual interest which every man has in the preservation of health and life. One man's estate may be in land, the property of another in the funds, of a third in a cotton mill, of a fourth on the wide ocean, of others in their labours, manual or intellectual; but each and all of these modes of obtaining individual subsistence, and contributing to the social welfare of the whole, are, and must be, subordinate, both individually and generally, to the possession of health. He whose property is vested in his own labour, who depends for his daily support on the work of his hands, or the workings of his brain, if health fail, must either starve or become dependent on public or private support; he whose estate has been acquired for him by the labour, manual or intellectual, of others, is still dependent for subsistence on the health of those who make it productive, and yet further, for the enjoyment of it, on the same invaluable possession in his own person. It needs no laboured argument then, to shew, that all such measures as relate to the improvement and efficiency of medical education, of medical police, and of the sanitary condition of the people generally, are peculiarly deserving of the attention of the Government and the Legislature.

The importance of due attention to the health of the military and naval services is admitted; and yet how often are the undertakings in which these services are engaged paralyzed by camp fevers, dysenteries, and other forms of disease. A better system, it is true, is now pursued, both in the army and navy; far more attention is paid to the sanitary condition of the soldiers and sailors; military and naval hospitals are under more efficient regulations, and the whole medical force of these departments is placed on a better footing. Yet even here, and especially on foreign service, there remains much to be desired. For examples, we need only allude to the failure of the African expeditions, and to the state of the African settlements, to shew that existing means are yet insufficient to contend with the force of disease.

In the late war in China, the 98th regiment entered the Yang-tse-Kiang river upwards of eight hundred strong. In little more than three months this corps was rendered almost entirely ineffective from sickness alone; one hundred and seventy-five died, no fatal casualty from battle having occurred, and only seventy were at that time left capable of performing the lightest duty. Dr. Wilson, who makes this statement, is disposed to attribute this heavy loss to over-crowding the vessel in which the regiment was sent out, and sending the men, immediately