II.

Report on the Use of Charcoal Powder as a substitute for Cinchona.

By R. CALVERT, Physician to the Forces.

To the Editor of the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—When I sent you a former paper on the subject of Charcoal Powder, which I see published in your number for January, I intended to have prosecuted the inquiry, and to have sent you the result of my experience from time to time, in order to confirm or disprove, as such experience might dictate to me, what I had therein stated. But being called to Malta immediately afterwards, in consequence of the plague that infested that island, I have had but little opportunity of putting the virtues of charcoal to the test in intermittent fevers. The investigation, however, has in nowise been retarded in Sicily, from my leaving it. Dr Calcagno, to whom I am indebted for the discovery, has published the result of his further experience on the subject, in a letter “Sull’ uso interno del Carbon di Legno,” &c. wherein he relates his having cured a double tertian in the person of Giuseppe Bellavia, a patient in his hospital, by administering the powder of charcoal in the dose of a drachm every hour during the intermissions, but without the addition of an acid, which he formerly thought necessary. The fever did not return after two ounces of the powder had been administered.

From the 23d September to the 13th October, he had an opportunity of employing it in five other cases, in four of which the remedy succeeded by the time two ounces and a half had been given; but in the fifth, the fever not being removed after the exhibition of three ounces, he judged it prudent to have recourse to bark, which prevented the following paroxysm, although but half an ounce of the latter had been prescribed. The period of this paroxysm being over, he again ordered the charcoal, and the patient continued well.

Maccadino, his pupil, on returning to Calatafimi, his native place, in the month of August, succeeded in curing eight cases of intermittent fever with the same remedy; and Signior Francesco Buscarelli, surgeon, following his example, found it useful in four other cases of the like nature.

“In the district of Aliminusa, (says Dr Calcagno) I know that

that the Journal * had scarcely arrived, when the practice became general, the inhabitants adopting it (the charcoal) as well without the prescription of the physician as with it; and these write to me in a letter, bearing date the 23d December, 'That the patients labouring under intermittent fevers that have been cured at this place by means of the powder of charcoal amount to a hundred and five; that each has not taken more than two ounces of the charcoal; and that the charcoal made use of was that prepared from the *stinco*.'" Dr Nicosia also employed it in 17 other cases in the district of Nissoria, according to the testimony of Dr Burza of Palermo. †

But, however assiduous the Sicilians may have been in taking advantage of a remedy they very much required, they have not been without rivals in many of British practitioners, under the auspices and control of Dr Borland, inspector of army hospitals. Mr Mackesy, surgeon of the 62d regiment, has permitted to be published in Italian seven interesting cases, in which the charcoal was successfully employed by him; but, as these cases will probably be published in England, I shall not enter into particulars respecting them. Mr Tully, surgeon 35th regiment, in a report made to the inspector of hospitals, dated Zante, November 12, 1813, states, that he has found the remedy particularly successful in remittent and intermittent fevers of that island; and that its administration, in more than thirty cases, principally intermittents, has been attended with the most happy effects. "In obstinate cases of diarrhoea, and in the last stages of dysentery," he adds, "I have seen that the charcoal, in doses of from 15 to 20 grains given three or four times a-day, is a most excellent remedy." This accords with my own experience, as related in the Journal for January. I shall relate a complicated case of intermittent fever and dysentery that occurred to me. It is to be remarked, however, that I did not prescribe for the man till the 29th July.

CASE.—ADAM HOPFFE, 20th Light Dragoons, æt. 37, orderly servant in the hospital, began to feel weak and languid in the middle of July, but did not complain till a week had elapsed, when, after attending a patient who died of dysentery, he was seized with headach, irregular chills, and other febrile symptoms, accompanied with a frequent purging of blood. He then took,

* The newspaper in which the discovery of the effects of charcoal was first announced.

† See *Littera sull' uso interno del Carbon di Legno nelle febbre intermittenti*, p. 11.

took, by order of the assistant, a dose of salts, which operated well. The purging continuing the next day, he took a grain of opium in the morning, and another in the evening. This gave him but temporary relief. Two days afterwards he took 15 grains of rhubarb, but the dysenteric symptoms continued. On the 29th he took three ounces of olive oil, which seemed to remove the symptoms of dysentery; but nausea and vomiting supervened, and, on the evening of the 30th, he was attacked with a regular paroxysm of ague.

On the morning of the 31st he complained of violent headach and weakness. The nausea and vomiting returned, and his appearance indicated considerable bodily disorder.

Sumat pulveris carbonis $\mathfrak{D}$ i. statim, et vespere.

August 1.—His appearance is much changed for the better. He has had no fever nor vomiting since yesterday morning; appetite returning; bowels perfectly regular; a great many eruptions have appeared on his lips.

Continuatur pulvis carbonis.

I am perfectly aware that the administration of charcoal powder internally is by no means new. I myself have seen it prescribed in the Royal Infirmary at Edinburgh, and it has been recommended by a number of foreign authors; * yet, as it has never been recommended with the intention herein set forth, our knowledge of these, its qualities, may be fairly considered as a discovery. But had its virtues been perfectly known before, its present neglect, contrasted with the foregoing evidence, is sufficient to justify me in urging it as strongly as possible upon the attention of the medical world.

Lazaretto, Leghorn, April 30, 1814.

III.

Case of Singular Affection of the Mamma, cured by the use of Iron and of the Kali Purum. By THOMAS SALTER, Esq. Surgeon, Poole, Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in London.

M. W. aged 22 years, of a phlegmatic temperament, and having what Darwin calls a bombycinous colour of the skin, applied

* Vide Moench, Thomann, Horn, Brachet, Brugnatelli, &c. &c.