

Hahnemann Case of a 24 Year Old Man

L-----ie, a compositor, 24 years of age, lean, of a pale and earthy complexion, had worked at the printing-press a year and a half before he came to me, and then for the first time suddenly felt great pain in the left side which obliged him to keep his bed, and which after several days went away under the use of ordinary medicines. Ever since that, however, he had experienced a dull disagreeable sensation in the left hypochondrium. Some months afterwards, when he had overloaded his stomach with sweet beer-soup flavoured with caraway, he was attacked with a severe colic, the violence of which he could not express, but at the same time could not say whether it corresponded with the colicodynia which succeeded it.

The attack passed off this time, I don't know how, but he observed, that after it he could not bear certain kinds of food. The mischief increased unobserved, and the colicodynia with its distinctive symptoms took firm root.

The worst kinds of food for him were carrots, all sorts of cabbage, especially white cabbage and sour-kraut, and every species of fruit, but pears in particular.

If he were so incautious as to eat any of these things within eight days after an attack which had been brought on by them, the liability was so increased that he could not eat even a morsel of a pear, for example, one or two weeks after without bringing on another severe attack.

The course of a severe attack was as follows. Four hours or four hours and a half after eating of such food-having previously felt quite well-a certain movement was felt about the umbilical region; then there took place suddenly, always at the same place, a pinching as if by pincers, but attended with the most intolerable pain which lasted half or a whole minute, and each time suddenly went away with borborygmus extending to the right groin-about the region of the caecum. When the attack was very bad the pinching came back, and the subsequent borborygmus more and more frequently, until in the worst attacks they were almost constant. There occurred also the sensation of a constriction above and below, so that flatus could pass neither upwards nor downwards. The uneasiness and pains increased from hour to hour, the abdomen swelled and became painful to the touch. Along with all this suffering, which resembled a fever, there came an inclination to vomit, with sense of constriction of the chest, the breathing was shorter and attended with more and more difficulty, cold sweat broke out, and there came on a sort of stupefaction with total exhaustion. At this period it was impossible for him to swallow a drop of liquid, much less any solid food. Thus he lay stupified and unconscious, with swollen face and protruded eyes, and without sleep for many hours; the attack of spasmodic colic gradually subsided by diminution of the pain, then followed some escape of flatus either upwards or downwards, and so the attack went off, (sometimes only after sixteen or twenty-four hours from its commencement). The strength only returned after three or four days, and thus he was again like a person in health, without any other uneasiness except the dull fixed pain before described, and general weakness and sickly appearance. He could not positively say whether this dull pain went off during the severe attacks or not, but he thought it did.

In these circumstances he could not retain his situation at the printing-press; he became a compositor. The attacks always recurred under the condition described, and had continued to do so for more than a year when he put himself under my care.

It might easily be supposed that the attacks arose from flatulence; this however was not the case. He could take, without the least inconvenience, a good meal of dry peas, lentils, beans or potatoes, and he was obliged to do so moreover, as his position did not allow him the opportunity of getting much else.

Or it might be supposed to arise from some kind of fermentation in the primae viae, or from some idiosyncrasy in respect to sweet things. But nothing was further from the case. He could take cakes baked with yeast, and sugar and milk as much as he pleased, even to satiety, without the slightest threatening of colic, although the first attack, seemed, as I have said, to be occasioned by the beer soup.

Or could an injurious acidity have occurred within the four hours (for the attack never occurred sooner, after partaking of the above things)? This was not the cause. Lemon-juice and vinegar were both innocuous. Neither did he ever vomit sour matter, either during the retching that occurred with the attack or when ordered an emetic. None of the absorbent earths or alkalis were of any use to him, whether taken during or before the attack.

A physician had suspected tape-worm, and subjected him to Herrnschwand's treatment, without any result. Neither before nor after he had passed anything which had the smallest resemblance to a tape-worm or indeed to any kind of worm at all.

When he came to me the idea of tape-worm had taken so firm a hold of his mind that I was obliged to order him all that was peculiar in the methods of Nuffer and of Clossius. He used all the medicines with patience, and pressed me to try every means with this view. Tartrate of antimony, gamboge, scammony, male-fern (four ounces daily for four hours together) charcoal, artemesia in large quantities, colocynth with oils, castor oil, tin, iron, sabadilla, sulphur, petroleum, camphor, assafoetida, and laxative salts-nothing was left untried; but they were given, as I have said, rather on account of his urgent request than to satisfy my own conviction, for besides the fact that no worms were ever seen, the two symptoms which I have so often observed to attend worms were absent, viz., the deeply wrinkled countenance and the sensation of a cold stream winding itself towards the back immediately after a meal.

Immediately after the sabadilla, which produced a creeping sensation like ants upon the skin (formication) and a heat in the stomach and over the whole body, I let him try the test of eating a piece of pear. It appeared indeed as if the attack had returned quite mildly, but after I had left him without medicine for eight days and again tried him with a small piece of pear, the colic came on just as bad as ever.

I have forgotten to mention that I had already previously tried all sorts of powerful so-called antispasmodic remedies at the commencement of the paroxysm. Small doses of ipecacuanha taken dry, lukewarm foot-baths and larger baths, opium and cajeput oil, without any result, even without any palliative effect. I only sought to palliate the symptoms at that time in order that he

might continue without molestation to use cinchona bark and to wash with cold water, to get the better of his weakness.

As his condition required immediate help, inasmuch as the colicodynia began to appear even upon the use of the smallest quantity of vegetable food, and as all I have done at his entreaty had been of no service whatever, I determined to give him a medicine which produced very similar morbid symptoms. The similarity of the griping pain, anxiety, constriction of the chest, fever, loss of strength, produced by veratrum album appeared to me calculated to give permanent relief.

I gave him four powders, each containing four grains, and told him to take one powder daily, but to let me know at once if any violent symptoms appeared. This he did not do. He did not return until five days thereafter. His unlimited confidence in my aid had nearly played him an awkward trick. The benefit I had promised from the powders had induced him to take two instead of one daily. After the second powder, without his having eaten anything injurious, there began an attack which he could not otherwise describe than as his spasmodic colic, or something very like it. This did not prevent him, however, from taking the third and fourth powder the following day (taking thus sixteen grains in rather less than two days), upon which, this artificial colic, if I may so speak, increased to such a dreadful extent, that, to use his own expression, he wrestled with death, covered with cold sweat and almost suffocated. He had required the remaining three days to recruit, and had returned for further directions. I reprimanded him for his imprudence, but could not avoid notwithstanding comforting him with the prospect of a good issue. The result confirmed it; under the use of tolerably good diet he regained his strength, and he has not had for half a year even a threatening of an attack, although from time to time he has eaten of the food which before was so injurious to him, but in moderation, as I impressed upon him he should. Since this event he has taken no more medicine, and no tapeworm was passed after the use of the veratrum.

The dull pain in the left hypochondrium likewise went at the same time.

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