

## ALKALINE URINE.

Dr. Rees points out that urine secreted normally acid, may become alkaline during its passage through the urinary passages, independently of delay in the bladder, and that such cases are benefited by alkaline medicines. He narrates a case in illustration, of a woman who passed alkaline offensive urine, in conjunction with small lithic calculi. She got worse under acids and was cured by Liquor Potassæ in Decoctum Pareiræ.—*Medical Gazette*, April 7th.

## CHLOROFORM IN INFANTILE CONVULSIONS.

The following instance is recorded in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, by Mr. Sabine :—

I was called to see a child, five months of age, who for nearly two hours had been labouring under the most severe and unremitting convulsions that it has ever fall to my lot to witness in an infant. There was a constant spasmodic jerking of the muscles of the arm, together with the diaphragm and abdominal muscles. Respiration was so much impeded, and had been for so long a time, that there was strabismus of both eyes, owing, probably, to the presence of partially arterialized blood in the brain. The surface was growing more and more cold and livid, and a clammy sweat stood out upon the little sufferer's face and temples. As various antispasmodics had been tried without relief to the patient, I decided upon using chloroform. But a few inhalations were made before the eyes rolled up, the spasm of the muscles ceased, the breathing was free and easy; in fact the child "came out of the fit." The pulse, which had been absent from the wrist before the administration of chloroform, was perceptible at once, and the surface of the body grew warm. In about three minutes entire consciousness returned, and in a short time the babe nursed.

Means were then adopted for regulating the disordered state of the bowels, upon which the convulsions were probably dependent. No vomiting, and no unpleasant effects whatever, followed the use of the chloroform in this case. The nervous system was fortified against it, just as in acute tetanus, patients will bear enormous doses of brandy or opium.

## MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE AND TOXICOLOGY.

## FATAL WOUND OF THE UTERUS, WITH TEARING AWAY OF THE INTESTINES, NOT FOLLOWED BY IMMEDIATE DEATH.

M. Tardieu (*Annales d'Hygiène*) reports a horrible case which recently came before the French tribunals. The violence in question was committed by a peasant on the person of his wife, seven months pregnant. The woman was heard supplicating for mercy *three quarters of an hour* after portions of her intestines had been seen in the yard, thrown there by him. On examining the body no traces of external violence were observed. A large quantity of blood was found in the cavity of the abdomen, with extensive lacerations of the vagina, uterus, and peritoneum, the edges of which showed that a cutting instrument had not been employed. The whole intestinal canal from near the

pylorus to the ileo-colic valve, was completely torn away.

Cases analogous to this are on record. *Suicides* have given issue to the abdominal viscera without causing immediate death. In respect of the uterus itself Dezeimeris cites fifteen cases in which the women have survived several hours and even weeks. Other writers gave cases in which the intestines protruded through the rent in the uterus and have sphacelated. The author relates a case in which the uterus and intestines were torn away by a pupil, and in which the patient lived several minutes; and Mauriceau has a similar case, the woman surviving an hour.—*British and Foreign Med. Chir. Review*, April.

[A notice of a case which occurred in the neighbourhood of Chesterfield, where the uterus was mistaken for the after-birth, and torn away, will be found in the *Provincial Journal* for 1845, p. 113, and at p. 168 of the same volume is an account of the inquest on a similar case which occurred at Costessey, near Norwich. In this latter instance a portion of the large intestines, as well as the uterus was forcibly removed. Death took place in the first case a few minutes after the infliction of the injury; in the other the patient survived half an hour.]

## PARALYSIS PRODUCED BY ARSENIC.

Dr. Clark related to the New York Medical and Surgical Society, the case of a young woman who, five months ago, took arsenic for the purpose of self-destruction. According to her own account she purchased sixpence-worth, amounting to three tablespoonfuls, all of which she took. This was about 11 p.m. Warm water was given her, and vomiting produced. At 3 a.m., she was taken to the New York Hospital, where the stomach-pump was used, the hydrated sesquioxide of iron having probably been previously administered. She had afterwards some fever, but gradually became better. Eight days after taking the arsenic she was seized with severe pains in the upper and lower extremities. The parts were swollen, but neither red nor hot. Three days after this she lost almost entirely power over her extremities; she has since continued bed-ridden, and is now at Bellevue. She can move her arms freely, and can close and open her hands, but with no force. The feet are still paralysed, but she can bend the knees.—*New York Annalist*.

## SUICIDE OF DR. HORACE WELLS, OF HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT, U.S.

Dr. Wells, the discoverer of the anæsthetic properties of æther, having been placed in confinement on a charge of vitriol-throwing, committed suicide by cutting the femoral artery of the left thigh with a razor. Previously to the fatal act, he inhaled some chloroform to produce insensibility to pain. When discovered he was quite dead, and the cell in which he was confined was a pool of blood. On the floor were scattered several sheets of paper, on which the unfortunate man had written a history of the vitriol-throwing, the use and effects of

chloroform, and the causes that led to his depriving himself of life. In one letter, he says he became acquainted with a young man who frequented his office, as a dentist, that his friend called and said he would thank him (Dr. Wells,) for some vitriolic acid, with which to pay back a loose female, who injured his (the friend's,) dress—that he complied with the request of the young man, and that they prepared a phial to squirt the acid, by making a groove in the cork-stopper thereof. The letter goes on to say, that they then sallied out into Broadway—that they met the female, on whose person vengeance was to be doled out—and that his acquaintance did so avenge the former injury.

The friend then proposed that they should “*continue the sport,*” to which he gave a direct negative. They then parted, Dr. Wells going home. Afterwards he explains how he was accustomed to the use of chloroform, which he inhaled over and over again to produce sensations of exhilaration. Two evenings after the one above mentioned, he used the chloroform, and in a moment of delirium he seized the phial of vitriol which was on the mantel, and rushing out into the street, commenced throwing it on the persons of the females who walked Broadway.

The following is the conclusion of his statement in his own words:—“I lost all consciousness before I removed the inhaler from my mouth. How long it remained there I do not know, but on coming out of the stupor I was exhilarated beyond measure, exceeding any thing I had ever before experienced, and seeing the phial of acid, I seized it and rushed into the street and threw it at two females, I may have thrust it at others, but I have no recollection farther than this. The excitement did not leave me for some time after my arrest.” He says he did not so much care to free himself from blame by this communication, as to give to the world the real facts in connection with the fatal circumstances. The reason he gives for the crime on his own person which he was about to commit is, that he abominated the idea of doing mischief, and that he felt that his character was irrecoverably gone. In speaking of his wife and child, he says most feelingly, “Oh my God protect them. I cannot proceed, my hand is too unsteady, and my whole frame is convulsed in agony: my brain is on fire.”

“Sunday, 7 o'clock, p.m.

“I again take up my pen to finish what I have to say. Great God has it come to this? Is it not all a dream? Before 12 to-night to pay the debt of Nature; yes, if I were to go free to-morrow I could not live and be called a villain. God knows I am not one. Oh my dear mother, brother, and sister, what can I say to you? My anguish will only allow me to bid you farewell. I die this night believing that God, who knoweth all hearts, will forgive the dreadful act. I shall spend my remaining time in prayer. Oh what misery I shall bring on all my near relatives, and what still more distresses me is the fact that my name is familiar to the whole scientific world as being connected with an important discovery. And now, while I am scarcely able to hold my pen, I must to all say farewell! My God forgive me! Oh my dear wife and child, whom I leave destitute of the means of support, I would still live and work for you, but I cannot. Did I live I should become a maniac. This

instrument of my destruction was obtained when the officer who had me in charge permitted me to go to my room yesterday.

“HORACE WELLS.”

“*To the Editors.*—My last request to Editors is that they will, while commenting on this unhappy affair, think of my poor wife and child, also my mother, brother and sister, all of whom are amongst the most respectable members of society.

“*To my dear Wife.*—I feel that I am fast becoming a deranged man, or I would desist from this act. I can't live and keep my reason, and on this account God will forgive the deed. I can say no more.

“*To Mr. Dwyer, Western Hotel, Courtlandt Street.*—Dear Sir,—When you receive this I shall be no more. I wish you would take my watch and present it to my dear wife, together with the trifle I have already given you. Please to attend to my burial, and let me be interred here in the most secret manner possible. I wish you and Mr. Barber would go immediately and reveal this misfortune to my wife in the most unobjectionable manner possible, and attend to the business which we spoke of this morning, when you little thought of this occurrence.

“HORACE WELLS.

“Messrs. Dwyer and Barber, Western Hotel.”

The deceased, as it is supposed, previously to committing the rash act, saturated a new silk handkerchief with the chloroform, and placed it to his mouth, where it was found tied by another silk handkerchief round his head. He was about 35 years of age.

[The foregoing particulars relative to this extraordinary case are extracted from an American paper. We give the letters entire, as exhibiting the state of mind of the writer at the time or immediately before the committal of the fatal act.]

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#### NOTICE OF THE LATE MR. P. N. SCOTT, OF NORWICH.

Page Nichol Scott, Esq., of Norwich, died, April 27th, in the 67th year of his age. He was the oldest practising surgeon in that, his native city, and before fixing himself there, was engaged at the Naval Hospital at Haslar. To this period of his life he always referred with emotion, on account of the opportunities it afforded him, not only of professional instruction, but of shewing acts of great kindness and attention to the sick and wounded French prisoners who came under his care.

Mr. Scott settled in Norwich in 1808, introduced as the partner of Dr. Rigby, on whose retirement he was chosen Assistant-Surgeon to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, thus filling the vacancy created by the late Mr. Dalrymple's promotion to the Surgeoncy; but not finding himself at ease in the prospect of the public duties to which this appointment was sure to introduce him, Mr. Scott resigned in 1819, after having officiated as Assistant-Surgeon for five years.

Mr. Scott turned his attention particularly to midwifery, in which department he conducted a most extensive practice; and few men have received in the provinces greater support than himself, or more promptly attended