

CASES OF NEURALGIA TREATED WITH ACUPUNCTURATION.

CASE 1.—*Neuralgia of the Foot.*—A young woman, when 22 years of age, became affected with a most excruciating pain in the right foot, which was occasionally swollen and apparently highly congested. She was repeatedly bled and the foot was frequently leeches; but without effect. For ten months she was obliged to keep her bed. When admitted into the clinical wards of the Turin Hospital under the care of Professor *Riberi*, the seat of the pains and swelling was on the outer side of the foot; from this point the pains extended up along the leg, and the swelling affected the entire *dorsum* of the foot. Whenever the foot was lowered even a few lines below the horizontal level, the sufferings were much increased, and the same result followed the mere pinching of the skin. The "point de depart" of the pain was manifestly in the nerves of the foot. Antiphlogistic remedies were tried at first; but although the constitutional health, which had begun to suffer, was considerably improved under their use, there was no relief of the local neuropathy. *M. Riberi* then tried acupuncture: ten needles were inserted into the flesh, and allowed to remain in for the space of an hour. The operation was repeated four or five days afterwards, and subsequently at seven different times. The second time, the needles were left in for two hours; then for three, four, and even five hours. From the date of the first operation, the pains were so much relieved that the patient could rest on the affected foot, and in the course of a month she was able to leave her bed and walk about, her sufferings having entirely ceased.

CASE 2.—*Sacro-lumbar Neuralgia.*—Giuseppe Vola, 38 years of age, had in the course of the year been affected with hydrocele on both sides; he was radically cured in the one instance by incision, and in the other by injection of the sac with the tincture of iodine. Subsequently to this, he began to suffer from most severe sacro-lumbar neuralgia. "This I relieved as by enchantment," says Prof. *Riberi*, "by means of a single acupuncture; the needles were left in for three hours. Three days subsequently the pain returned; and again it was as quickly relieved."

The place where the needles were inserted, and the number used, are not stated.

CASE 3.—*Severe Brachial Neuralgia.*—A young woman, about 20 years of age, had been often affected with various nervous complaints. While being bled from the arm, she experienced, at the moment the incision was made, a violent involuntary trembling accompanied with an intense pain in the fold of the arm, and a rigid contraction of the fore-arm. This contraction continued with such violence that it could not be overcome by the use of splints or any other means that were used. When admitted into the hospital, the chief symptoms were the intense pain of the arm, complete loss of sleep, and considerable derangement of the digestive organs. The pain was of two kinds; the one dull and cramp-like, the other lancinating and burning. The seat of the former was chiefly in the course of the median nerve, and extended downwards from the fold of the arm to the fingers; whereas the latter, which was not accompanied with trembling of the affected parts, involved all the nerves of the arm, not excepting those of the skin, and sometimes passed on to the trunk, affecting the lungs and the heart: hence the sense of suffocation and of constriction of the chest, and the syncope, which often supervened during the paroxysms of suffering. The cicatrix presented a small, almost imperceptible, knot, which was certainly not the only, nor even the principal cause of the pain. The severity and continuance of the patient's sufferings at any time seemed to be much influenced by the state of the atmosphere.

The paroxysms of pain were brought on by either quickly extending or bending the fore-arm or all the fingers at one time, or by pinching the middle finger, or again by pressing on the cicatrix at the bend of the arm, or by gently rubbing the arm or fore-arm with the hand, &c.

Whatever was the exciting cause, the pain, developed either in the cicatrix or in the fingers, shot with the rapidity of lightning to every part of the limb, then to the shoulder, chest, and region of the heart, and the most frightful symptoms were induced.

To prevent all sort of friction, pressure, or extension of the limb, the patient, when walking lowered her shoulder and inclined her body to one side, as if she was affected with a lateral curvature of the spine.

After trying the effects of the internal use of belladonna and henbane, and of the external employment of prussic acid, &c., Signor *Riberi*, had recourse to acupuncture. From ten to twenty slender needles were inserted into the flesh of the arm along the course of the median nerve, and allowed to remain in for from two to four hours. This operation was practised about twelve times in the course of two months. After each acupuncture, a very marked relief was obtained; and ultimately the patient was completely and permanently cured. It deserves to be mentioned, as a very striking proof of the efficacy of the remedy, that from the very first day of its employment the patient was able to move the arm without much distress, and the pain, from being fixed, became moveable, and ceased at those points where the needles had been inserted; so that by multiplying these punctures, the pain became more and more distant, and at length finally ceased. After the sixth operation, the patient did not complain of any pain, unless when firm pressure was made over the course of the median nerve or of its principal branches; and after the tenth operation, she was able to use her arm freely in her domestic occupations.

CASE 4.—*Lumbo-sciatic Neuralgia.*—A countryman, 63 years of age, was admitted into the hospital with a large hydrocele of the right testicle. The urinary passages were excessively tender, and there was always more or less ischuria. The hydrocele had been preceded with severe pains not only in the affected testicle, but also in the right groin and in the loins, which had continued with great violence for ten days, and were followed by the occurrence of numerous varices of the veins in both legs, and more especially in the left one. Subsequently to this, the patient had suffered with symptoms of inflammation of the upper part of the spinal marrow—the chief symptoms were vertigo, stupor, spasmodic pains in the upper extremities, and afterwards a sense of dullness and weight in these parts. By the use of leeches, and of a seton, &c. these symptoms were entirely removed. The hydrocele, which was of several years standing, had acquired a considerable size; and the patient complained of intense neuralgic pains in the corresponding testicle, radiating from this point to the loins, and to the right sciatic region, in which it ultimately fixed.

After the evacuation of the water from the tunica vaginalis, the lumbo-ischiatric pain became more severe than ever, and the right limb was quite powerless. Twenty needles were inserted,—(it is not stated where)—and allowed to remain in for upwards of three hours. The operation was repeated four times; and a radical cure was obtained.

CASE 5.—*Painful Paralysis of the Limbs.*—A middle-aged woman was attacked, subsequently to a troublesome disturbance of the menstrual function, with severe pains in the loins, which were gradually followed by a paralysis of both lower limbs. Every now and then she experienced spasms, which extended from the limbs to the abdominal parietes and spine, and were accompanied with formication, lancinating pains, a sense of tightness and constriction and of great heat. To these symptoms succeeded a numbness in the limbs, extreme slug-

gishness in the intestinal and urinary evacuations, and at length a state of complete paralysis. Various local stimulants had been tried; but they seemed to be rather hurtful than otherwise. This indeed might have been expected, seeing that the disease depended upon a sub-inflammatory state of the lower extremity of the spinal cord and of the principal nervous trunks which issue from this part. Under the use of perfect quietude and a mild antiphlogistic regimen, the patient somewhat improved; and Professor *Riberi* then had recourse to acupuncture. Twenty needles were inserted into the sacro-lumbar region, and along the course of the sciatic nerves, and allowed to remain in for about three hours: this operation was repeated eight different times.

After the second operation, the pains had nearly ceased; and soon afterwards the bladder recovered its expulsive powers. At the end of three weeks from the first employment of the needles, the woman was able to leave her bed and walk about the wards without the aid of either crutch or stick. Gradually the limbs regained their healthy suppleness and force, and a complete and durable cure followed.

The last case reported by Professor *Riberi* was one of more than ordinarily severe lumbago, which had resisted all the usual remedies. Acupuncture was therefore had recourse to, and with the best effects; for ultimately the patient was quite cured. The operation was repeated ten different times; eighteen or twenty needles being introduced each time. It was remarked that the pain never returned in the seat of the punctures.

The series of cases now detailed proves, in a very satisfactory manner, the powerfully remedial effects which the operation of acupuncture has in relieving various forms of neuralgic suffering. The attention of practitioners is apt to be distracted in the treatment of this too-often most unyielding complaint by the multitude of remedies which are daily proposed: acupuncture is certainly one of the most efficient, and deserves a more extensive trial than has hitherto been given to it.—*Gazette des Hôpitaux, No. 96.*

REPORT ON M. PETREQUIN'S METHOD OF TREATING DEAFNESS.

Since the publication of *M. Petrequin's* Memoir on the Treatment of Deafness by alum gargles and insufflations,* various experiments have been made in different parts of France and Belgium, to ascertain the effects of these remedies, and the Royal Academy of Medicine has directed its attention to the subject in the course of last year. A lengthened and very favourable report has been recently laid before the Medical Society of Lyons by *M. Brachet*, of which the following brief account may be interesting to our readers.

After alluding to *M. Petrequin's* opinion, that the use of the Eustachian tube is similar to that of the holes made in a drum—viz. to renew the air within the cavity of the tympanum—and presenting an abstract of the eleven cases reported at length in his memoir, the following important conclusions drawn by *M. B.* from his experience are given: 1. That deafness is of very frequent occurrence in old people, in whom the mucous membranes do not perform their functions healthily, and who are subject to catarrhal congestions; also in those persons who have been subject to any of the numerous forms of inflammation of the pharynx.

2. That the inspection of the throat furnishes a means of exploration which greatly facilitates the diagnosis, by often revealing a chronic and indolent inflammatory state of its mucous membrane.

* Vide *Medico-Chirurgical Review* for July 1839.