

Arsenicum Album.

GUY BECKLEY-STEARNs, M. D., NEW YORK.

A man of 53, had been ill for fifteen weeks of septic endocarditis and was in extremis; he was delirious, covered with purpuric spots, very restless, had hiccoughs constantly and painful spasms of the diaphragm for three days. Arsenicum covered his case, relieving the hiccough and causing sufficient reaction to prolong his life for two weeks. Study of his case made it clear that *Arsenicum* had been his remedy from the start—that is to say, fifteen weeks before I was called in.

I obtained from the family all the early symptoms which they could remember and reviewed the few similar cases that had come under my own observation. *The only salvation for these cases is the administration of the exact similitum, early.* This man first remained home because of a slight fever and headache; then, three days later, went to business, although feeling weak and in the evening found that he had fever, so stayed home again and called in his physician. After twelve days, a heart murmur was discovered. All that I could learn from the family was, that he objected to remaining at home as, for the first three months, he did not feel that he was ill enough to make staying home necessary; all that he suffered from was some pain in the occiput and inability to get his head in comfortable position because the scalp was sore, and he felt worse when the weather was wet. His appetite was gone, but during the first half of the night, he was thirsty for small amounts, frequently repeated.

The urine was profuse at first.

Restless and worried from the beginning of his illness and the worry and restlessness were worse during the first half of the night.

This is not a text-book picture of Arsenic, but, reviewing the salient features, we have :—

1st. A streptococcic infection; the streptococcus causes virulent infection which tends to invade the entire organism instead of localizing.

Arsenic is a virulent poison and clinically is one of our commonly indicated remedies in septic infections. So the quality of malignancy of infection must be recognized early and is one of the key-notes of Arsenic.

2nd. Restlessness is one of the most typical things about Arsenic and we are taught that it is worse at night, especially from 1 to 3 A. M. I have often observed, as in this case, that the restlessness begins in the evening and is worse before midnight. As to the worry in this patient's case, there was much in his business affairs to cause it. But he was not what could be termed "anxious." In my serious Arsenic cases, anxiety has been as often absent as present, and in some cases there has not been even restlessness.

3rd. Appetite and thirst. He had the classic combination: loss of appetite and increased thirst for frequent, small amounts. Later, he had neither appetite nor thirst. In severe acute illness requiring Arsenic I have just as often found thirst insatiable for large amounts—"Can't drink enough." Occasionally thirst has been quite lacking.

At times, the lack of appetite is very striking and is expressed by both words and countenance—"I can't endure the thought of food." These symptoms are given by Lippe as "loathing of the thought of food."

This keynote is one of the most valuable that I have picked up for Arsenic.

4th. Aggravation in wet weather; this is at times a strong modality in Arsenicum, but I do not remember ever meeting it in an acute case before.

5th. This patient could not find an easy place for his head because the scalp was so sore: Hering gives the highest value to the following symptoms: "Can scarcely bear to have the hair touched, because the scalp is so sensitive."

All these symptoms develop sufficiently early in the attack for a careful prescriber, even though at first he might not have seen Arsenicum as the remedy, to find it very soon, by comparing groups of remedies having the general characteristics: "Worse in wet weather, worse before midnight, and restlessness." Since the patient had vitality enough to live seventeen weeks, he might have had resistance enough to live with the aid of Arsenicum, if given early.

There are a few other indications on which I have learned to rely.

Usually there is something characteristic in the face; if the illness is well developed, the expression registers "sickness" and with this may be anxiety or suffering or distress. The face may be pale or flushed, blue or hippocratic, but the evidence that the patient is ill, is plain. Very characteristic, however, is an angry, circumscribed flush on the cheeks: this is as characteristic as under Phos. or Sang. or Sul. It has often been the first symptom in serious cases to lead me to study Arsenic.

Another objective symptom relates to the tongue.

In gastric conditions, it may be white as though white-washed; in infections, it is thickly coated, with red edges, or it has a red streak in the centre with red tip, or red edges which take the imprint of the teeth or dry red with the papillæ elevated. All of these are characteristic and each is the kind of tongue that occurs in severe infection.

In one case of long-lasting infection, the patient com-

plained of a constant sweet taste and that everything she ate tasted sweet.

We are taught that the Arsenicum patient is chilly this at least is not always marked. Many of my Arsenic cases have preferred the covers well up around the neck, but in a few instances this was not so. One thing I have observed and that is, that the patient would become flushed and warm toward late afternoon and in the early part of the night and then want the covers off. Hering gives this as "evening and night," and Sulphur has a similar symptom in the afternoon or evening.

In a case of septic endocarditis, in a young woman who died of it in about 5 weeks, the following were practically her only symptoms :—

Hectic flush.

Face flushed and patient so hot that she demanded air and to be uncovered in the late afternoon and evening.

Coated tongue with red edges.

Sulphur has all of this and was given, but with only a temporary checking of the symptoms.

In the light of what I have since learned, Arsenic was her remedy.

A Hollander landed in New York with an acute exacerbation of a chronic appendicitis. Complicating this was a severe bronchitis. The latter yielded to Bryonia, but a retrocaecal abscess formed. After the operation a bronchitis flared up and the wound became infected. He was irritable, anxious, fearful of draughts; had a slight hectic flush, became flushed in the late afternoon and evening and then wanted the covers off; had much thirst and little appetite, the thirst being more at night; his feet were at times so hot that he put them out of bed; and the pus from the wound was profuse, green and very offensive. Expectoration was copious and green. Sulphur slightly

modified his condition, but under *Arsenic 1m* the wound became clean in three days, and in less than a week the surgeon freshened the edges and sutured them and there was no further trouble.

From this last, we can add "green discharges" as a keynote. I have observed green expectoration in pneumonias requiring *Arsenic*, but, more frequently the expectoration has been frothy and white, later becoming bloody.

An old man with a serious pneumonic infection presented the following complex: The attack commenced with chilliness, severe headache and vomiting; his temperature was high and his pulse very tense. He had the hectic flush, the later afternoon flush and heat. He had responded to *Aconite*, in the manner that patient always do respond to a partially similar remedy, by temporary improvement. Then he rapidly began to grow worse, with mental dulness and confusion and in voluntary yellow diarrhoeic stools. At that time, I did not know the value of the hectic flush or evening heat symptoms, but whilst I was watching him, the nurse gave him a drink. After drinking, he gave a short, hacking cough. I asked the nurse whether he often did that and she said "Yes, every time he drinks." All through his illness he never coughed except after taking a drink. *Arsenic* is one of the remedies that has this symptom and it cured him. Since then, I have many times verified the symptom under *Arsenic*: "*Cough after drinking.*"

Now a word as to the *Arsenic* pains:

The classic burning pains, better from heat, are most frequently observed, but just as characteristic are sharp, cutting pains resembling those of *Bryonia*. These are worse from motion, but also are worse from touch or pressure, this last serving to distinguish them from *Bryonia*.

Illustrating the pains, a young woman with acute

articular rheumatism involving both knees and ankles, had severe cutting pains, worse in the evening before midnight, with restlessness at this time and excruciating pain worse from the slightest motion or touch. Her tongue was heavily coated, with red edges which showed the imprint of the teeth. She was thirsty; said, she couldn't drink enough, but, to use her own words, "could not bear the thought of food." Her face was pale.

Arsenic 1m cured her so quickly that she left the hospital in less than a week.

Another typical case was a young man who had influenza. Home treatment with Aspirin brought him to the hospital very ill, with right-sided pneumonia. He had intense cutting pain in the lower right chest, worse on breathing or motion, worse lying on the right side; insatiable thirst, aversion to food, face pale with angry hectic flush, tongue white-coated with red edges; expectoration white, frothy and bloodstreaked.

As is usual when the exact similimum is given, *Arsenic* 30th brought his temperature down to normal within 48 hours.

Arsenic cases of pneumonia are likely to develop pleuritic effusions which may become empyemas. He had the effusion, but it cleared up.

Summarizing the Arsenic infections: They are of a virulent type, such as occur from the streptococcic, the influenzal, and other groups of bacteria that tend to spread through the blood, instead of localizing, or the toxins of which are very depressing.

From my observation, I believe, Arsenic is the most nearly specific remedy for septic endocarditis and for a general streptococcic infection. I have cured with it one case of the former and one of the latter, and have seen two cases of septic endocarditis which died and in which

Arsenic was undoubtedly the similitum—but which had not been given.

I have heard of two cases of infective endocarditis cured by Phosphorus and some consider Phosphorus the specific. It may be that horrors lie between Arsenic and Phosphorus; they are closely related and have similar symptoms and one will help, where the other is better indicated, as I have a few times demonstrated.

The following combination of symptoms, however, can be absolutely relied upon: An angry hectic flush, with a red tongue or a white-coated tongue and red edges and red papillæ showing, or red streak down the centre of the tongue, the patient being thirsty for small quantities of water frequently, or an insatiable thirst for large quantities, or, in rarer cases, no thirst at all. Lessened appetite, especially if there be loathing of food. Usually, although not necessarily, there is restlessness, and this is particularly characteristic when the restlessness is more noticeable around 1 A. M. or in the evening and the first part of the night. Very typical, also, is the flushed face and sensation of heat in the late afternoon and early evening, when the patient usually wants warm covering, though not always.

With any of the above-mentioned combinations the face may be pale or flushed all over.

In pneumonia, cough after drinking is a reliable symptom, and the expectoration may be green or frothy and white.

Loose cough is characteristic, where the patient recovers slowly, is pale and has a pleuritic effusion.

The face almost invariably expresses severe illness. There may be burning pains ameliorated by warmth, or intense stabbing or cutting pain, aggravated by the least motion.

All of the above have been gleaned by repertorial analysis of many cases, followed by comparison with the *Materia Medica*. It is not possible to give elaborate comparisons, but the following remedies are mentioned in Kent's Repertory :

Septic fevers : ANTHR., *Apis*, ARN., ARS., *Bell.*, BAPT., BRY., *Cadmium*, *Carb v.*, *Cur.*, CROT. HORRID., ECHI., KALI PHOS., PHOS., *Phos. ac.*, *Puls.*, PYROG., LACH., LYC., *Merc.*, MUR. AC., *Rhus tox.*, *Rhus v.*, SUL., TARENT. C.

Hectic flush : ANT. TART., ARS., CHINA, *Colchicum*, *Dulc.*, FER., *Iod.*, *Kali carb.*, *Kreos.*, *Lach.*, LYC., PHOS., *Puls.*, *Sang.*, *Stan.*, SUL.

Tongue with red streak down centre : *Arn.*, *Arg. nit.*, *Ars.*, *Bell.*, *Bry.*, CAUST., *Cham.*, *Crot. horrid.*, *Eupat. pur.*, *Kali bi.*, *Lac. can.*, *Phos.*, *Phos. ac.*, *Pb.*, *Sang.*, VERAT. VIR.

Tongue with red edges : ARS., *Bapt.*, *Canth.*, CHEL., *Crot. horrid.*, *Fluor ac.*, *Gels.*, *Iris*, *Kali bi.*, *Lach.*, *Lyc.*, MERC., *Merc. bin.*, *Nit. ac.*, *Phos.*, *Pb.*, *Rhus tox.*

Tongue with red tip : *Apis*, ARS., ARG. NIT., *Fluor ac.*, *Lach.*, *Lyc.*, *Nit ac.*, PHYT., RHUS TOX., RHUS VEN.

Loathing at thought of food : ANT. CRUD., *Ant. tart.*, CHINA, COCC., COLCH., *Ip.*, *Puls.*, SEPIA, *Thuja*.

Thirst for large quantities : *Acon.*, ARS., BRY., *China*, *Qocc.*, *Eup. perf.*, *Fer. phos.*, *Lac. d.*, *Lycps.*, *Merc. cor.*, NAT. MUR., PHOS., *Stram.*, SUL., VERAT ALB

Thirst for small quantities : *Apis*, ARS., *Bell.*, *China*, *Coloc.*, *Corn.*, *Hell.*, *Lach.*, LYC., *Rhus tox.*, *Sul.*