

A case of phthisis apparently cured / by William Pepper.

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A CASE OF PHTHISIS APPARENTLY CURED.

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THE following noteworthy case was seen in consultation with Dr. W. Duffield Robinson. The patient was a woman of 21 years. The family history revealed a decided taint of tuberculosis, her mother and several other members of both sides of the family having died of phthisis. Her mother died in the spring of 1892.

In March, 1893, the patient suddenly began to lose flesh, her appetite became poor, her digestion much deranged, cough and expectoration appeared, and general debility followed so rapidly and overwhelmingly that when first seen during the latter half of the month she was already bedridden. At that time her condition and the physical signs were as follows: She was extremely emaciated, weighing but 100 pounds. Fever was constant, very irregular, and with a high evening rise. She suffered nightly from the most profuse and exhausting sweats. Her appetite was entirely abolished, the stomach was so irritable that the slightest cause would provoke violent attacks of vomiting. Cough was persistent and the expectoration very free, the daily average was eight fluidounces of thick, tenacious, heavy sputum. In the right apex and over the base of the left lung were signs of consolidation,—increased fremitus, dulness on percussion, bronchial breathing with fine crackling râles and a few bubbling râles. The sputum contained myriads of tubercle bacilli; the bacteriologist regarded the abundance of bacilli as the most extreme in his experience, hundreds could be counted in one field. An unfavorable prognosis was, of course, the only one that seemed justifiable.

The patient was placed upon a diet of egg-albumen, which seemed

to agree with her stomach better than any other food, and this diet was forced so that she consumed daily the albumen of two dozen eggs. The medicinal treatment consisted of $\frac{1}{1000}$ of a grain of strychnine nitrate with $\frac{1}{1000}$ of a grain of atropine sulphate, every two hours hypodermatically; and $\frac{1}{50}$ of a grain of strychnine nitrate with $\frac{1}{17}$ of a grain of the double chloride of gold and sodium, and $\frac{1}{2}$ of a grain of a vegetable digestive every two hours by mouth. After a few days the amount of gold and sodium was increased to $\frac{1}{8}$ of a grain every two hours. She was given cod-liver-oil inunctions, and general massage with passive movements once daily. At first she showed signs of strychnine intoxication, and the dose was reduced, but she soon resumed the original dose, and after the first two weeks she bore the drug well, although always just inside the border-line of its toxic action. During April she improved decidedly; she regained flesh, the fever became less marked, the night-sweats less profuse, the cough was allayed, and the expectoration much reduced, though still rich in bacilli. During May the improvement was very rapid. By the latter part of the month she had recovered her normal weight, 125 pounds. The fever and night-sweats had disappeared, the appetite was good and the digestion normal, the cough was almost gone, and tubercle bacilli had disappeared from the sputum, which was still expectorated in very slight amount. All signs of consolidation in the right apex and base of the left lung had disappeared, the only remaining sign was slightly harsh breathing at those sites. She was instructed to continue her general treatment, to return to a normal diet, to practise forced, deep breathing and graduated exercises, and was sent to the mountains. In September she returned to the city in perfect health. Her weight was 132 pounds; she was robust and muscular, with better chest-expansion than she had ever possessed before in her life. There was no cough or expectoration, the lungs were in all respects entirely normal, except for a patch of emphysematous breathing in the base of the left lung. She re-entered upon her social duties and has since led a busy life. Her health continued perfect until early in August, 1895, when she had a slight attack of pneumonia involving the base of the left lung. The sputum was sparse, resembled prune-juice, and was crowded with pneumococci and tubercle bacilli. The attack ended by crisis on the eighth day, and a few days later she was again sent to the mountains. She returned in ten days with a recurrence of all the symptoms of the attack of two years previous. Her weight had fallen to 114 pounds, there were anorexia, fever, cough, and free expectoration, which was full of tubercle bacilli. In the base of the left lung was consolidation with moist râles. She was placed on the same treatment given her during the first attack, and she rapidly

regained flesh and strength. On November 1 her weight was again up to 124 pounds, all fever was gone, the cough and expectoration had almost disappeared. Tubercle bacilli were not to be found since the last week in October. The consolidation had become greatly reduced, but was still present, when a few days later she was again sent to the mountains.

Noteworthy points in this case are : the sudden onset, quite like general miliary tuberculosis ; the large number of bacilli ; the rapid recovery, all the more remarkable with a pronounced tubercular family history ; the complete disappearance of consolidation and bacilli ; the acute reappearance after two years of the whole train of symptoms, with signs in the base of the left lung directly following an attack of pneumonia located in that vulnerable part ; the large number of bacilli and their early complete disappearance in the second attack ; the abatement of the consolidating process, and rapid recovery of the general health after the second attack ; the absence from the treatment of all cough-medication and antiseptics, and the large doses of strychnine nitrate and the double chloride of gold and sodium, with which the system was kept literally saturated.

