

Epilepsy : a case of twenty years standing cured, with the treatment and remarks thereon / by John Epps.

Contributors

Epps, John, 1805-1869.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

Publication/Creation

London : Ebenezer Palmer, 1834.

Persistent URL

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EPILEPSY,

A CASE

OF

TWENTY YEARS STANDING CURED,

WITH

THE TREATMENT AND REMARKS THEREON.

BY JOHN EPPS, M. D.

DIRECTOR OF THE ROYAL JENNERIAN AND LONDON VACCINE INSTITUTIONS; LECTURER ON CHEMISTRY, MATERIA MEDICA, AND BOTANY, AT THE WESTMINSTER DISPENSARY, AND AT THE WESTMINSTER SCHOOL OF MEDICINE; GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH; AND MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LONDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, &c. &c.

LONDON :

EBENEZER PALMER, 18, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1834.

REPORT

A CASE

TWENTY YEARS STANDING CURD

AND

THE TREATMENT AND SUCCESS THEREOF

BY JOHN RICE M.D.

PHILADELPHIA: PUBLISHED BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO. 1854.

LONDON:

JOHN RICE, 11, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1854

DEDICATION.

To the Members of the London Medical Association,*

MEETING AT THE

WESTMINSTER DISPENSARY, GERRARD STREET, SOHO.

GENTLEMEN,

OUR Society is young. The greenness of youth will soon be changed for the vigour and the stability of manhood by your exertions. This little tract was offered to your consideration, and you received it kindly; I therefore present it to you for your protection, and have the pleasure to remain,

GENTLEMEN,

Your fellow-member and labourer,

JOHN EPPS, M. D.

89, *Great Russell Street,*

Nov. 14, 1834.

* F. W. Crump, (Vice-President)—M. Dickenson, (Vice-President)—W. Mead—John Thurnam—Mr. Yarnold—Joseph Toynebee—C. Elkins—J. B. Peacock—Edward Rigge—C. B. Garrett—I. S. Fitzpatrick—Charles Churchill—J. Woolmer—T. Harewood—James Dulkan—J. L. Emerson—Mr. Crutch—Mr. Davis—Mr. M^cCrea—L. Davis—Mr. Samwell—Joseph Machill—Mr. Rothero—Mr. W. Wade—Mr. Huxtable—Mr. Whittam—Mr. Trant, and others.

A CASE OF EPILEPSY

OF TWENTY YEARS STANDING.

WHEN a person suddenly falls, is insensible, is violently convulsed, foaming at the mouth, and not recovering his sensibility till after the convulsions have ceased, he is said to have an EPILEPTIC FIT, and the disease is called EPILEPSY.

Epilepsy, like every other disease, is very much influenced in its manifestations by circumstances. Hence writers have named different varieties of Epilepsy. Three may be noticed as comprising almost every variety in manifestation : these are, *partial* epilepsy, *imperfect* epilepsy, and *modified* epilepsy. Epilepsy is said to be *partial* when the convulsions, instead of affecting the whole of the body, affects the muscles of a particular part of the body only. *Imperfect* epilepsy is when some one of the phenomena generally attendant upon an epileptic seizure is wanting ; thus, in some cases, the convulsions are not apparent in vio-

lent writhings; the state of insensibility is a principal feature. *Modified* epilepsy is that where *all* the symptoms are present; these however being modified by other symptoms occurring at the same time. The hysterical epilepsy is perhaps one of the most common, and in this we have with the symptoms of epilepsy those of hysteria.

I shall now relate a case of epilepsy, and in relating it shall explain the views that I entertain regarding the disease, and the mode of treatment most likely to be successful in conformity with these views.

The case which I shall select is one of upwards of twenty years standing. I select it because from its duration it is an interesting one. I select it also, because the cure is permanent: and I select it also, because the cure has been permanent for a period of nearly *three* years: a period, which may be fairly considered as giving a fair opportunity to judge of the permanence of the curative effect.

A. B. aged 35, the father of nine children, six of whom are now alive, engaged in the management and the instruction of a very large school, has been subject to epilepsy since his eleventh year. The fits, which at first occurred at intervals of a month, came on, more lately, once a fortnight, still increasing in frequency. He consulted me in the month of September, 1830. Several medical men of talent had been previously ap-

plied to, but the view of the case taken by them was very variable. One physician thought the fits depended upon a *too great flow of blood to the head*, and *leeches* to the temple and the back part of the neck constituted the principal feature in his mode of treatment. Another practitioner declared that *tape-worm* was the cause, and he prescribed *the rectified oil of turpentine*. With this gentleman's opinion and practice, the opinions and the practice of many others of inferior note coincided. All the plans were ineffectual. One eminent practitioner candidly confessed his disinclination to undertake the case.

Having tried so many plans of cure, and having consulted so many practitioners, A. B. gave up all hopes of cure. His occupation, however, being that of a teacher, necessarily made him eager to embrace any opportunity by which relief might be obtained. Indeed, his friends observed that he seemed not to be able to connect his thoughts, and that his memory of words began to be affected.

Phrenology was brought under the notice of some of his friends; who, concluding that a Phrenologist must know more of the diseased conditions of the nervous system than others, not acquainted with the science, recommended him to consult me. He, considering their conclusion just, did consult me, although encouraging scarcely any hope that I could do much good.

After a minute examination of his case, I told him, that though *many* symptoms militated against, yet

more justified, a hope of recovery; and therefore I agreed to undertake the case. The trial was commenced, and it was looked upon by the patient and his friends as a final one.

I shall briefly state the general condition of A. B. He is of middle stature, rather light complexion, and of the age noticed. He was at this time affected with severe dyspepsia, as manifested under its various unpleasant forms, languor, flatulence, sense of distension, weight and some pain at the pit of the stomach, excessively nervous, frequent pains in the head, with pain and *heat* more particularly at the back of the head, with soreness of the muscles of the neck.

The indications which the examination of the case presented to my view to be fulfilled were twofold; first, to *remove the dyspepsia*, and second, to *remove the cerebellic affection*.

To relieve the dyspepsia, I ordered the following mixture.

R. Acid: Hydrocyanici ad formulam	
domini Scheele.....	gr. xxx
Sulphatis Quininae.....	ʒß
Sulphuris præcipitati.....	ʒiijß
Confectionis Aromaticæ.....	gr. xv.
Aquæ Distillatæ.....	ʒiij

Of this mixture he was ordered to take a tea-spoonful three times a day; and to keep it carefully excluded from the air and the light.

To relieve the *cerebellic* affection, I prescribed the use of the following *liniment* :

R. Linimenti Saponis	ʒi
Linimenti Camphoræ comp.	ʒʒ
Tinct. Lyttæ	ʒiv
Ol : Succini : Rectificati	ʒvi

This liniment was to be rubbed diligently down the *spine* every night, obviously because thereby any congestion whether of the cerebellum or of the spinal cord might be relieved by the counteraction induced upon the surface.

A. B. commenced attending to my regulations on Sunday, Sept. 26, 1830.

During the first week he had great pain and weakness in the back (occasioned, as he thought, by the rubbing) also violent stitches and sudden pains through the day, darting from the spine. These effects are worthy of remark, and always, when occurring, strengthen my hope as to the probable success, because, when produced thus readily they indicate the nervous system to be in a condition capable of being excited ; and that no important *structural* mischief has taken place.

I ought to notice here that he had experienced an attack of the epileptic fit a few days before I saw him.

What still further strengthened my hope of success was that during the first week already noticed, the nervous agitation was excessive, and on Monday, October 4, he commences the feelings in his head to a "whirlpool," and

added, that, "though he had experienced an almost infinite variety of sensations, they were never so peculiar before." On the Saturday following he felt so much better, "so light and free from pain, that he could fancy he had springs in his shoes."

The occurrence of the peculiar feelings described, as occurring on the 4th of October, may be referred perhaps in part to the circumstance of its being about the time of the *bihebdomal* period of attack.

The rubbing produced considerable eruption, which was troublesome to him on account of the itching, a circumstance I did not regret, as this, when developed readily, is to be looked upon as a favourable symptom.

A. B. gained so much relief, that he was encouraged to persevere.

Perceiving the expected effect was in progress of obtainment, I wrote to him to desire him to desist from using this liniment for a week, after which he was to have recourse to it again thrice a week for three successive weeks. The mixture, as the dyspepsia was much relieved, to be taken *twice* a day.

Believing as I do, that almost all cases of epilepsy have as the diseased condition, occasioning them, A WANT OF POWER IN THE NERVOUS FIBRES OF THE CEREBELLUM, I ordered, that now he should begin to use in addition, a liniment, consisting of the *alcoholic extract of the nux vomica*, dissolved in rectified spirit, to be rubbed on the back of the head for eight days.

This was commenced on October 17, three days after which the nervous agitation before described, returned; this being again about the bihebdomal period. The patient felt little of it again till November 7th. Up to this period he had been free from fits: a very unusually long time.

It may be asked, WHY DID NOT YOU USE THE ALCOHOLIC EXTRACT OF NUX VOMICA AT FIRST? I answer. I think that it is not safe; and from this reason: very often there is a congested state of the vessels of the cerebellum, or rather of the meninges connected with it and of the spinal cord, and I have invariably adopted *general friction of the spine* before using local friction with a powerful tonic to the head. This congestion, however, I do not believe, is in more than in one case in a hundred, dependant upon what is called *determination of blood* to the head; an idea, which has occasioned the sacrifice of hundreds by the lancet. I consider the congestion dependant upon debility of the nervous fibre of the cerebellum, so that the vessels become congested from want of tone in the parts they supply: and even the pressure of the proper quantity of blood flowing through them is too great for these fibres in the debilitated condition in which they are.

To return to the case—

It may be proper to notice, that, during the remission of the rubbing on the back, the shooting pains darting from the spine returned; and again ceased on resuming the friction. Relief was also experienced

from the friction on the back part of the head, the patient stating in his letter, "I have been much relieved from the great *heat* and *pain* that I have generally felt at the *back of my head* since I have adopted the rubbing."

In addition to these means, I recommended the patient, with a view to promote the tonic effect upon the system, to wash the chest and the neck every morning with cold water, rubbing them dry with a rough dry cloth. He was further requested to disuse the *head* liniment for fourteen days, and then to continue it for a week. This discontinuance in the use of powerful nervoso-tonics, such as the one I prescribed, I think highly important, taking care at the same time that the other remedial means be not diminished, so as to allow the remedial effect to be diminished.

During the interval from the 28th of October, to the 6th November, the patient was troubled with a "*boil*," "just below," as he states, "the organ of Amativeness." This boil further confirmed my hope of cure. I like this and other similar attempts of the vital powers. It omens favourably.

In reply to his letter of the 8th of November, I desired him to take the following powder every morning :

℞. Sulphatis Quininæ gr. iij.
 Pulv. Cinnamoni gr. i.
 Misceut fiat pulvis.

And to rub the back every other week. This was attended to during eight weeks, after which the liniment was used twice for seven successive nights. Between the date of this letter and January 1st, he caught a severe cold, and had another attack of the English cholera, the latter of which I am inclined to ascribe to the *quinine*, acting peculiarly on the liver. To obviate this peculiarity of action, he took a Seidlitz powder, with a teaspoonful of the best Cogniac brandy twice a week. The head I ordered to be rubbed with salt and water, and the back with the liniment, once a month for three successive nights.

The first of January, 1831, opened upon my patient very differently from the 1st of January, 1830. In a letter, dated January 1, 1831, the patient states, "The sun has just risen upon another year; and I have great reason to praise God for his goodness. The first morning of last year I well recollect rising in pain and with a distracted head, having had a severe attack during the previous night, but now I have not had an attack since the week you saw me in Manchester."

On March 4th, my patient mentioned a circumstance, strikingly illustrative of the modification which dormant diseases often undergo in the *spring*. He writes, "For the last two months I have had a *periodical* attack, every fortnight, of *vomiting* in the night. It causes me to spring out of bed *before* it awakens me. The vomiting continues very violent for some time, and little, save a frothy matter, comes off the sto-

mach. On one occasion the patient awoke before the vomiting came on, and the sensation experienced was that of a round substance at the bottom of the throat, which went gradually down till it reached the stomach. The vomiting then began. After the vomiting ceased, the round substance seemed to pass into the bowels and then die away, generally by *purging*.

This curious modification of the disease attracted my patient's attention so much the more, because he had not, previously to this, been subject to vomiting.

Another circumstance, which attracted the notice of the patient, was that for the *three weeks* previous to the 4th March, he had a burning heat on the crown of the head, about a hand's breadth, which struck down the back of the head, and caused a sensation of great weight on each side of the lower part of the brain, confusing the head very much; the least motion of the head sideways occasioned a feeling as if all the muscles were strained, very similar to the feeling he had after the fit.

Being convinced that the vomiting was *periodic* and *spasmodic*, and I might say *hysterical* in its character, and that the peculiar sensation described was *nervous*, I ordered of the *liquor arsenicalis* three drops three times a day, and the following pills :

℞ Assafoetidæ lachrymarum gr. xii
 Sulphatis Quininæ gr. viii
 Fiat pilula vi ; duce hora somni sumendæ.

These pills were to be taken for three successive nights *before* the expected attack. At the same time a box of aperient pills were ordered, consisting of the Compound of Rhubarb pill and Dandelion Extract (prepared according to Mr. Houlton's formula by Smith, of Brown Street, Nutford Place.)

These means were attended with partial success, for the attacks diminished. The burning heat and uneasy sensation on the head, left A. B. four or five days after he began taking the drops. A visit to the Isle of Man during the vacation did the patient good.

Still the vomiting, attended with purging, and the suffocating feeling, troubled him at intervals of *two* months, the suffocating feelings continuing sometimes day and night.

Looking as I did on these symptoms as indicative of the attempts of the vital powers to relieve the system from the affection of the brain; or as the patient says, *the complaint evidently arises from the removal of the fits*; and as viewing the matter thus, I thought it my duty to *help* nature in obtaining a means of relief, without exahusting her own powers; I prescribed an *issue*.

The pressure occasioning the suffocating feeling commenced under the *shoulder blades*, forcing up the throat, as if some one was strangling the patient.

In a letter, dated March 21, 1832, the patient states, "The spasmodic affection left me the day the issue was put in, and I have not had the least symptom of

it since, the case is certainly the wonder of every one.”
—The patient has remained since up to this period Nov. 11, 1833, free from fits.

He has had some returns of these vomitings and purgings, but not attended with the suffocating feelings: they were unattended also by the soreness of the muscles of the neck.

All the friends agree in stating that not only has he been relieved in reference to his *bodily* powers but also in relation to his *mental*. He can deliver a speech for *half an hour* at a time, without notes, and every one observes a greater connexion in his ideas and a greater power of expression than he has ever manifested before. Ideed, the cure is looked upon by the weak-minded as a miracle; by the weak-minded and pious as a wonderful instance of the blessing of God; and by the intelligently religious as an instance of the *power of those means properly applied*, which the Creator in his goodness has appointed for the benefit of man in healing his diseases.

There are some practical conclusions connected with this case.

First. THAT LENGTH OF TIME IN REFERENCE TO EPILEPSY IS NO OBSTACLE TO THE ATTEMPT AT CURE. I have no hesitation in undertaking any case of epilepsy, of whatever duration, if *general fatuity* is not present. When that is, we may conclude that the material organization of the brain is injured. This conclusion, however, I do not arrive at unless the fatuity is constant.

In judging of the constancy of the fatuity I find that the analysis of mental manifestations afforded by Phrenology is the only safe guide. Thus a person may not remember his friends ; he may not know them one week, and he may know them the next. This would be a kind of fatuity, but not a constant and not a general one. This would be an affection of only one faculty, as Phrenology establishes ; and I should have hopes of this case, if the power of remembering size, shape, colour, succession, of the textures of bodies still remained.

In fact, it is very difficult to mark the precise limit where the line of hope terminates in the line of despair.

Second, THAT MARRIAGE DID NOT REMOVE THE EPILEPSY.

Holding the views that I do regarding the organ principally affected in epilepsy, viz. the *cerebellum*, and knowing that nothing tends to restore any organ in a debilitated state to health than proper activity, I recommend to epileptic patients, *marriage*. This, affording by the privileges connected with it, relief to the inactivity or suppressed activity of the cerebellum in a *state of continence*, very often is attended with the highest benefit in cases of epilepsy. And it often leads me to observe and feel keenly how opposed is the present condition of the political and social system, under which we live, to the Will of the Creator, when, on recommending marriage to a patient, I find that pecuniary means and the heavy burdens of taxation and necessary

expenditure connected with the marriage state, constitute an insuperable barrier.

And when, in addition, I remember, that relief to this inactivity is sought in improper channels, this feeling of enmity to the present social, or rather unsocial state, is augmented : more particularly as I know from many cases, that *illicit gratification does not relieve epileptic patients*, but, in most instances, increases the disease. The reason of this will be apparent, because the excitement, the moral struggle, which take place when men act contrary to conscience, obviate the good effects that would otherwise be connected with the activity of a natural function.

And, when, further, I look to another consequence of this unsocial state, viz. that the youth is often led to improper practices in order to relieve himself of that peculiar state of irritability, connected with a predisposition to epilepsy, my enmity is increased, and I see it to be my duty as a *medical* man to use every legitimate exertion to overturn those established abominations, which so oppress industry as to prevent the ability of hundreds being so extended as to marry.

I have known pious young men have recourse to improper practices, because they could not get married ; and because their religious principles would not allow them to obtain relief from illicit connexion. The consequence has often been that epilepsy has thus been developed ; and, if developed previously, has been rendered ten times worse.

There is another fact that the epileptic patients have stated to me when closely questioned, that, when under the excitement of the feeling referred to, the back part of the head has become very hot, and a perceptible throbbing and uneasiness have been experienced, which required for the relief a brisk rubbing.

A third conclusion is,

THAT IN CASES OF EPILEPSY, ATTENDED WITH DYSPEPTIC SYMPTOMS, A CURE IS MORE LIKELY THAN IN THOSE NOT SO ATTENDED. The reason is, that, in these cases the development of the epilepsy is so intimately connected with the condition induced by the dyspepsia. The mere cure of dyspepsia will not cure epilepsy, as some have surmised. Such individuals mistake *amendment* or *relief* for *cure*: because the epileptic attack is not developed for a time, they infer that the case is cured. Let them follow their patients, and they will soon find, that, merely *relieving* or *removing* (if they please) the *dyspepsia* does not cure the epilepsy.

The fourth conclusion is,

THAT THE PECULIAR MODIFICATIONS WHICH THE DISEASED CONDITION ASSUMES, SHOULD NOT DISHEARTEN, BUT MERELY INCREASE OUR WATCHFULNESS.

In the case recorded, we see how many forms, if we may so speak, the diseased condition assumed. These forms, it was necessary to meet, and by meeting them

the result was happy. Many are disheartened, both practitioners and patients, by these changes of form in diseased manifestations : the only successful practitioner is he, who, while acknowledging to the full extent the wiles of the enemy with whom he has to contend, points out to the patient, and keeps before his own mind, all the *good points* in the case : and building his prospect of progress on these, and meeting the foe as he presents himself, victory will, in most cases be his.

Another conclusion to which I have arrived from an extensive experience in the treatment of epilepsy, is, that the SPASM OF EPILEPSY is not to be looked upon as in itself dangerous ; being rather a MEANS ADOPTED BY NATURE TO RELIEVE THE SYSTEM from the effect of temporarily augmented pressure of the cerebellum. Viewing the convulsions in this light strips them of their horrors.

WORKS PUBLISHED BY DR. EPPS.

LIFE OF DR. JOHN WALKER. Sold by Whittaker and Co. Ave Maria Lane.

ESSAY ON COUNTERACTION. Sold by Renshaw and Rush, Strand.

THE STUDENT'S ASSISTANT.

HORÆ PHRENOLOGICÆ. Sold by Ebenezer Palmer, 18, Paternoster Row.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY DEDUCED FROM PHRENOLOGY.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

The following extract from a letter from
General Sir John Doyle G. B. and K. C. to
Dr Epps is the best appeal to British sympathy

"The General can never forget the impression made upon him by the extraordinary situation in which he first made an acquaintance with that amiable and benevolent individual, (Dr Walker). The day after the action near Alexandria where the brave Abercrombie fell, the General was riding over the field of battle, attended by two orderly dragoons, to see if there were any wounded French or English who had escaped notice the evening before, when, on turning round a wall near the cascade, he was struck with an appalling sight of more than a hundred French soldiers with their officers huddled together, desperately wounded by grape and cannon shot from an English big of war. From being collected in the recess of the wall they had escaped notice on the previous day of search and were exposed to the night air and with unnumbered wounds. Here the General saw a man, evidently English, in the garb of a Quaker, actively employed in the heavenly task of giving his humane assistance to those poor brave sufferers, giving water to some, dressing the wounds of others, and affording consolation to all. Upon enquiring he found the benevolent individual to be Dr John Walker, who was himself almost exhausted, having been thus nobly employed from day-break without any assistance."

