

## ON THE TREATMENT OF ULCERS, AND OTHER CUTANEOUS AFFECTIONS.

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THERE is no class of diseases which may be so justly termed "*opprobrium medicorum*," as that which embraces almost every variety of ulcer, and of cutaneous disease. Thompson says, speaking of ulcers, that out of twenty surgeons, not more than one can be found who can treat ill-conditioned sores or ulcers, the consequence of wounds necessarily inflicted by themselves, in their operations. Can this be attributed to prejudice and disgust for such loathsome affections; or does it arise from the adverse and complicated distinctions of nosologists; the discrepancy of remedial agents; or, more probably, from the want of a correct knowledge of their pathology? As I have encountered the usual difficulties, and have been much disappointed, in the treatment of such cases, by the routine practice of ointments, lotions, bandages, &c.; and as I have, on the other hand, been very successful in effecting cures, in some remarkable instances, by the application of a certain compound powder, I take great pleasure in now laying before the profession the result of my experience, and the means I have employed.

Having witnessed the surpassing efficacy of wheat flour, as an application, in three cases in which the persons were very badly scalded, some years since, by the bursting of the boilers of the steamboat Walker, I was led by inference to adopt a plan somewhat similar, and based on the same principles, for other breaches of surface, and cutaneous affections.

My first case was B——, a young merchant of this city, who had been afflicted for about six months with psoriasis of the back of the hand and between the fingers, which had resisted every remedy in the hands of other practitioners. Greasy, escharotic, and other applications, conjoined with the internal use of sarsaparilla, &c., had been used in vain. It now occurred to me, that if I could produce an artificial crust over the disease that would absorb the acrid discharge, and at the same time protect the tender cuticle beneath, I should succeed in producing a healthy and durable dermoid surface. I directed him accordingly to discharge any fluid that might collect—to bathe his hands with acetic acid, and to follow this up by the following application, which was to be powdered on the surface, *ad libitum*:—R. Oxy. mur. hydrarg., ℥i.; lapidis calaminaris, ℥i.; marantæ arundinacæ opt., ℥i. Misce et tere diligenter ut redactus sit in pulverum subtilissimum.

Besides the local application, I directed such constitutional treatment as was adapted to the case, and had the satisfaction of seeing, as the result of my remedies, the perfect cure of my patient in about a month.

My next case was Nicholas M——, a barkeeper, who was afflicted with a disease of the feet, which, on examination, corresponded much with Sir Everard Home's "fungated ulcer" of the sole of the foot and toes. The metatarsal bones and phalanges were denuded of integuments in some places. My patient had used a variety of remedies for more than a year, without any mitigation of his sufferings; and he was now hope-

less of a cure being effected. I directed him to use the same formula as above ; preceded, however, by bathing the ulcerated parts with a solution of argent. nitrat. ; and to take internally, fluid extract of sarsaparilla, for constitutional effect. The powder was dusted over the ulcerated surfaces ; a scab immediately formed ; all pain ceased ; granulation was effected ; and my patient was discharged perfectly cured, in a little more than one month.

On his representation, M——, a barber, consulted me for the same disease, which had annoyed him for about four months, and had made already considerable depredation. He had used various remedies administered by others, but with no avail. The same course was pursued with him for three weeks, with the like happy result.

The above cases were under treatment in 1842–3, and in no instance has the disease returned, or any constitutional bad effect resulted from this method of cure. I have since cured several species of cutaneous disease, as syçosis, herpes, &c., by this process ; and have not yet failed, in the application of it, in any variety of ulcer which I have encountered. The following I will particularize as another evidence of success :

V——, a countryman, applied to me in November last for medical aid, on account of a syphilitic ulcer of the thigh, which was as large as a dollar, and of the depth of an inch. The same plan was adopted ; a scab immediately formed ; my patient could attend to his occupation, and, notwithstanding this ulcer had resisted all treatment for six months, in other hands, it entirely healed up in less than five weeks, under this mode. Besides the above mentioned, I have discharged, recently, two cases of ulceration about the ankle-joint, in which situation most experienced medical men will agree with Sir E. Home, that ulcerations are extremely intractable. In both these instances, the patients were cured in the space of two weeks.

The most remarkable case, however, of the efficacy of this plan of treatment, is one which I had the pleasure of discharging this week, cured. Mrs. C—— had been much afflicted with scaly tetter of the hand for three years. During this period, to use her own words, she had tried various physicians, not excepting the noted (Thomsonian) McLean, formerly of this city. She had used a variety of applications, and taken at least a *barrel of infusion of sarsaparilla*, all with no happy effects or alleviation of her troubles. I directed her to use the powder in the same manner as in the case of B—— (above described), and to take internally, eight drops of Fowler's mineral solution three times a-day, &c. By these means, the disease disappeared in five weeks ; and a sound and healthy dermoid texture is now to be observed.

What is the *rationale* of the reparation of ulcerated parts ? Home and Hunter tell us that it consists in the formation of small red points and eminences, which are termed granulations. That an exudation of coagulable lymph is to be regarded as the first step in the process ; that these granulations are supplied with bloodvessels and nerves from the adjacent parts ; that these new substances have the same power, *i. e.*, to secrete pus ; and that they contract, and are finally covered over with cuticular substance, by which further secretion of pus is prevented.

We will now take into consideration the indications to be fulfilled in the cure of ulcers ; and here we find no settled policy—some recommending greasy, enollent, or applications in the form of vapor ; others condemning them *in toto* ; and but few evincing a correct knowledge of the pathology and treatment of this class of disease.

The following are the prominent indications to be fulfilled :

1st. The promotion of a healthy secretion of pus : for Thompson tells us, that he has never seen granulations without pus.

2d. To confine and prevent evaporation of matter, so as to retain a moist and warm atmosphere. According to Thompson, a local increase of temperature of two or three degrees, is always necessary to granulation.

3d. To preclude the contact of air and light (two stimulants) ; for the same author says, that ulcers sometimes show a tendency to gangrene, from unknown states of the weather ; and ulcers are apt to change their character from vicissitudes of the air.

4th. To protect granulations, and sometimes to repress, without irritation, their excessive growth ; diminish serous and puriform discharges, and to give support to the ulcer ; but this growth must be kept back by only such resistance as they are able to overcome : otherwise the absorbents will remove the granulations.

5th. To promote the formation of scab or cuticular covering.

We see the above indications carried out in Sir E. Home's application of dry lint ; which, he says, is to protect the granulations, absorb, retain, and prevent evaporation of matter. So, also, he used powdered rhubarb, *i. e.*, to repress granulations, and form skin. Thompson says, Baynton's plan of using adhesive straps, and Whately's process of bandaging, act on similar principles. With like views, Dr. Physick applied his favorite cicatrizer—simple cerate and British oil ; Sir E. Home, his alcohol and various innocuous powders ; Harness or Thompson, the grated root of the cassava (a fecula), in weak sphacelating ulcers of seamen, &c.

With all these rules before us, it is surprising how little regard is paid the *lex naturæ* in the cure of these diseases. Does this arise from ignorance, or inadvertence, or nosological errors ? That there are some general principles wanting in the cure of these affections, is evident from the fact that very few ulcers will continue to heal under the usual treatment, beyond a certain time, without a change of remedies ; and from the multitude of discrepant ones applied by different practitioners, all tending to the same end, but without knowing the why or wherefore. I must here observe, that I do not lay any claim to the discovery of "a new method" in the treatment of ulcers. The treatment by the formation of an artificial scab, is as old as the days of Celsus, of which any of our readers may satisfy himself by referring to his work, "*De Re. Med., Lib. V. cap. IX. quæ crustas ulceribus inducunt.*" I only wish to attract attention to the modification of an old method, which I have used, and to the efficacy of which I can testify. At the same time, I am perfectly aware, that, by bestowing unworthily and extravagant praise on a remedy, we in reality do but detract from its reputation, and run the risk of banishing it from practice, or preventing its use altogether.

The basis of my remedy, it will be readily perceived, is *fecula*, and with this any medicine may be combined, to suit the wishes of the practitioner. I generally use the formula before described, modified according to circumstances, by increasing or diminishing the strength of the most active ingredient. We all know that, in the healing of sores, wounds, eruptive diseases, &c., nature ordinarily provides a scab, under which a reparation of healthy structure is completed, and the cure effected. Tear the scab off, and the cure is procrastinated. My remedy has a twofold effect: it acts by induction, copying after one of nature's laws in substituting a scab for that which she produces; and it operates simultaneously in fulfilling the rest of the above indications. It is now nearly five years since I commenced the use of it, and I have had no reason to be dissatisfied with its effects in a single instance.—*New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal.*

#### THE PROTECTIVE POWER OF VACCINATION.

[SEVERAL members of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, at one of their meetings, took part in a discussion of the prophylactic powers of vaccination. Their views are somewhat conflicting, but something may be learnt from them, and they are therefore copied from the Summary of the Transactions of the Society.]

Dr. Condie maintained that, as a general rule, the protective power of vaccine infection, in those who had been once placed fully under its influence, was, under ordinary circumstances, permanent. We know, that in certain variolous epidemics of great malignity, scarcely anything affords immunity from the disease, and very many of those who have been vaccinated, as well as of those who have already had the smallpox, either from inoculation or otherwise, are attacked with more or less violence. He has seen no facts to convince him that the power of the vaccine protection is impaired, and finally destroyed, in the course of time. There are, unquestionably, certain constitutions, which resist the vaccine infection entirely, while there are others which can only be placed partially under its influence, and which, in a short time, become again liable to be attacked by the smallpox. It is as a means of detecting and remedying these partial infections, that the practice of re-vaccination becomes of importance.

During the prevalence of smallpox, Dr. C. has not certainly observed that the susceptibility to an attack of the disease was generally greater in the adult who had been vaccinated in infancy, than in individuals who had been vaccinated but a few years previously.

Dr. Moore remarked, that his experience differed very much from that of Dr. Condie. He has invariably found, that the susceptibility to the contagion of smallpox, in those who had been vaccinated, as well as the violence of the disease when it occurred in them, was in direct proportion to the length of the period that had elapsed since the vaccination was performed. Thus, within the first year after the vaccine infection,