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ON PILES.

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ONE of the most frequent, and, if ever diseased action may be so considered, *salutary* consequences of stricture of the rectum, is the formation of piles, than which an affection more common to all classes and ages of people could not perhaps be mentioned. So prevalent, indeed, is the disease in this country, that till it has proceeded to some considerable extent, persons not unfrequently do not consider it requisite to consult their medical advisers upon the subject, but are content either to use the nostrums of some reputed quack, or such topical applications as may be recommended by some kind friend, who has experienced relief from the like source. In the milder forms of piles, surgical attendance is not always necessary; too often, however, from protracted neglect, they become an equally formidable and painful malady.

A just consideration of the causes of any disease will be our best guide not only to prevent its occurrence, but likewise as to the method of treatment we should adopt for its removal or alleviation; let us therefore briefly inquire into the causes of piles.

Various as these will be found, they all tend towards the same results; viz. deposition in the cellular tissue, which unites the mucous and muscular tunics of the rectum; distension of the minute vessels of its mucous coat, and more or less enlargement of the hæmorrhoidal veins. Piles may therefore be produced by any circumstance, constitutional or mechanical, which preternaturally excites, or mechanically obstructs, the circulation in these particular parts. Thus they not uncommonly arise from an injudicious perseverance in the use of peculiar or violent purgative medicines, or excessive bodily exertion, particularly horse exercise; hence, also, results the prevalence of the disease in persons accustomed to a sedentary mode of life, the warmth excited from the constant sitting position of the body promoting an inordinate action in the vessels of the lower part of the rectum; while the want of proper exercise induces a torpid and confined state of the bowels, in a great degree assisted by a deficiency in the biliary secretion.

I believe the disease is often caused, or much increased, from the fashionable, yet pernicious custom of sitting upon chairs having hair or stuffed seats. Persons, especially those whose occupations are of a

sedentary description, should accustom themselves to use chairs, the seats of which are composed of cane, formed into a net work.

The soft blue hæmorrhoidal tumor which may be said to be the true pile, will always be found in conjunction with an enlarged, or otherwise diseased condition of the liver, which circumstance is physiologically explained, when we consider the immediate connection that exists between the *vena portæ* and the hæmorrhoidal veins. From this cause, these veins will sometimes become distended to so great a degree, as to form tumors of a very considerable size; and I have seen an instance, in which from extreme enlargement of the hæmorrhoidal veins, the fore-finger could not be introduced into the rectum beyond the first joint; the patient was likewise the subject of fistula in ano.

Another effect of irritation in the rectum is, that coagulable lymph is from time to time thrown out upon the inner coat of the intestine, but more particularly in the cellular tissue which connects the mucous and muscular portions of the bowel. This deposition organizes and gradually increases, till at last a huge mass of superstructure is formed, which is productive of extreme annoyance and exquisite suffering.

But another and extremely prevalent cause of the disease will be found in a contracted condition of some part of the rectum, which causes an accumulation of sæculent matter in the bowel; this necessarily irritates it, and sooner or later produces ulceration of some portion of its mucous surface; while the perpetual straining which accompanies the desire to relieve the bowels, the result of the accumulation, injects the minute vessels of the intestine, distends, and finally causes them to rupture; from which sources arise the hæmorrhage, more or less experienced by those who are subject to piles. Now it is not always judicious, suddenly to correct this effect, for although it is a diseased action, it, not unfrequently, is the mode by which nature relieves herself, and it thus, perhaps, prevents the formation of a more serious disease.

The foregoing is, as I believe, a brief and simple, yet correct, narrative, both of the formation of piles, and of the hæmorrhoidal excrescence; and I next proceed to a few practical observations on the treatment of these diseases.

This, in a great measure, must necessarily depend upon the cause from which the disease arises. Should it be connected with any hepatic affection, we of course principally direct our efforts to restore the healthy state of the liver. Surprising relief will often be imparted from the loss of four or six ounces of blood at intervals repeated according to the discretion of the medical attendant. This may be taken either from the arm or by the application of cupping glasses to the region of the liver; the latter is, perhaps, the most preferable mode. The application of leeches to the orifice of the bowel is a valuable remedy, in those instances when the tumors are situate within the sphincter; but when they are external to it, I have often found that more irritation is produced from the bites of the leeches than benefit from the quantity of blood which they abstract. Not unfrequently they induce great tumefaction of the parts, which seriously aggravates the patient's sufferings. But in the cases of internal piles, especially those which are attended

with any hepatic disease, the use of leeches will be found of great service, for they not only diminish the general volume of the blood, but, by unloading the vessels at the inferior portion of the alimentary canal, operate more immediately upon the affected parts.

I have lately been in the habit of puncturing that description of pile which is almost wholly produced from distension of the hæmorrhoidal veins, with the acupuncture needle; by this method some ounces of blood may be abstracted, which will afford instantaneous relief to the patient. This plan may be adopted almost *ad libitum* by the medical attendant, and is entirely free from that apprehension of real, or imaginary danger, which by some is considered to belong to dividing these veins with the lancet; which latter practice I have often adopted with great service; neither have I ever found any untoward result from it. Furthermore, I am acquainted with an individual who was in the habit of performing this operation on his own person, a practice which, notwithstanding its successful issue, cannot be too strongly reprobated.

Evaporating washes* are of service, not only by alleviating the inflammation in the piles, but also that irritability of the sphincter which almost invariably accompanies the disease, to a greater or less extent. I prefer using these in a tepid state, for when they are applied cold, patients are oftentimes not sufficiently cautious respecting their use; either from inattention, or dislike to the momentary feeling produced from the application of cold, they permit the linen rag to get dry; hence an increase instead of a diminution of the local action ensues.

A gentle stimulus by an ointment applied to the sphincter twice or thrice in the course of the day, will, in the milder attacks of the disease, not uncommonly be of essential benefit;† this plan will not, however, agree with all constitutions, and should therefore be adopted with caution.

The administration of medicine forms a most essential part of the treatment of the disease. It is well known that particular drugs, as for example aloes, exercise a peculiar action upon the intestinal canal; such description of medicines are therefore to be avoided; large doses of any kind of purgatives adopted as a habit are improper; nevertheless, as the disease is often connected with extreme costiveness, it is best at the commencement of an acute attack, to give a brisk dose of medicine, so as fully to unload the intestinal canal, and by such means facilitate the progress of the circulation through the rectum. In the milder forms of the complaint, the bowels may be kept regular by the use of small doses of castor oil, the confection before prescribed, milk of sulphur, or any mild aperient.

The use of *enemas*, when the situation of the tumors admits of the

* I have been in the habit of using the following formula.

Recipe, Spirit. Rorismar. ʒii.
Aque Am. Acet. ʒiv.
Mist. Camphoræ, ʒx.
Misce. Fiat lotio.

† Recipe, Pulv. Gum. Camphoræ, ʒss.
— Galls, ʒi.
— Opil, ʒi.
Ung. Flor. Samb. ʒi.
Misce. Fiat Unguentum.

ready introduction of the pipe, ought never to be omitted; they not only lessen the local irritability of the parts, but sometimes, by removing the feculent collections in the intestine, supersede the necessity for any kind of aperient medicine. All violent exercise, particularly riding, must be abstained from. These, together with a reasonable attention to diet, constitute the principal features to be observed in the ordinary treatment of piles. With the most cautious attention, however, the disease will not unfrequently progressively increase, till at last we are compelled to relieve our patient's affliction by the means of operative surgery; and this brings me to the next division of my subject, viz. the removal of the Hæmorrhoidal Excrescence.

It does appear to me somewhat extraordinary that the course of treatment adopted by those of the profession who have more particularly studied this subject, should be so widely dissimilar. While we find some authors recommending the removal of the hæmorrhoidal excrescence by excision, we read of others who advise, with equal confidence, its extirpation by the ligature. True it is, that by far the larger portion of those who, by their experience, may be counted valuable authority on the subject, are favorable to the operation by excision; thus, among the ancient writers on surgery, we find it was adopted by Wiseman, Petit, Le-dran, Sabatier, as well as by many of the present day, such as Abernethy, Hey, Fletcher, Ware, Home, Kirby, and Dupuytren. On the other hand, Mr. Pott, Sir Astley Cooper, Mr. Copeland, Mr. Howship, and others, practically acquainted with the subject, appear to favor the removal of the disease by the ligature.

With such a weight of evidence before me, it may, perhaps, be considered presumptuous to offer any decided opinion upon the subject. I believe, however, that although both descriptions of operations are occasionally liable to objections, these not unfrequently originate either in the circumstance of the operation being injudiciously undertaken, or unskillfully performed; and that, if the subject is dispassionately considered in all its bearings, the weight of evidence will greatly preponderate in favor of the removal of the disease by excision.

To substantiate this position, let us suppose the instance of a surgeon being consulted by a patient suffering from an extreme case of the hæmorrhoidal excrescence. He inquires into the state of the patient's general health, and ascertains that he has not any enlarged or otherwise diseased condition of the liver; no stricture in the rectum, nor any organic affection to which the formation of the excrescences may be reasonably attributed. He examines the part, and discovers one or many tumors originating in the rectum, and either protruding externally, or being within the sphincter. On what is he to found his judgment as to the removal of the diseased parts, by excision or by ligature? I should say not so much upon the size of the tumors and their extent of attachment to the rectum, as upon the condition of the hæmorrhoidal veins. When the tumors are *external* to the orifice of the bowel, there cannot, I think, be a question as to the manner in which we ought to proceed; since, as we are able to quell any hæmorrhage which may

ensue, we have a perfect control over the only circumstance which, in this instance, militates against the operation by excision.

In the removal by ligature we shall have to encounter much local irritation, and not unfrequently severe constitutional disturbance, over which, when it is once excited, we have a very limited control. Provided there are several tumors, which is a common occurrence, we shall be necessitated to perform several operations. The application of the ligature is usually extremely painful, its operation tedious, and not unfrequently incomplete, by reason of the base of the tumor being left, which forms a nidus for the return of the disease; neither is the danger from hæmorrhage entirely removed, for sometimes the ligature will get loose, and slip off before the vessels are completely separated. I know an instance where this circumstance occurred, and which had nearly proved fatal to the patient. The treatment after the removal of the tumors is likewise protracted; and, lastly, it is, I think, inapplicable where there is any material distension of the hæmorrhoidal veins.

The application of ligatures to veins is, I think, one of the most uncertain operations in surgery. I have so often seen fatal results follow their use, that I confess I am not a little prejudiced against the operation; and I believe that the failure of the removal of the excrescence by the ligature, is often referable to the injudicious manner in which it is placed upon the enlarged hæmorrhoidal veins.

Now the removal of the excrescence by excision is more expeditious, it is more complete, the pain is less, as is the danger either of local inflammation or of constitutional disturbance, the parts heal more kindly, and finally, when we are compelled to divide the enlarged hæmorrhoidal veins, the probable danger from hæmorrhage is not by any means so great, as that which is to be apprehended from the constitutional and local disturbance which almost invariably follows the including of them in a ligature.

A reasonable objection may be advanced against the operation by excision, in the division of the mucous membrane of the part; but I would fearlessly ask, Is the danger of inflammation from this cause greater than that which is likely to ensue from the application of a ligature to the same part? I should think not.

I can only say, that I have for many years been in the habit of performing the operation by excision, and that with the most perfect success; occasionally, I have had to encounter hæmorrhage; but never, save in one instance, to such an extent as to endanger the life of the patient. I am inclined, therefore, to believe, that when bleeding ensues to any material extent, the tumors are accompanied with an enlarged or otherwise diseased condition of the liver, with stricture of the bowel, or such an unhealthy condition of the constitution, as may give rise to an hæmorrhagic disposition in the vessels at the lower part of the alimentary canal; and, in the neglect of the due observance of any of which circumstances, not only the danger, but the unsuccessful issue of EITHER description of operation is very likely to originate.

And here I think I should be guilty of no inconsiderable dereliction of duty, was I to omit adverting to the careless manner in which these

tumors are frequently removed. Not only are the causes of the disease altogether lost sight of, but its extirpation decided upon without the slightest degree of constitutional preparation; indeed, were we to judge from the observations delivered in some of the medical schools of this metropolis, it might reasonably be supposed that the excision of piles was an operation, altogether so simple, that it might be performed at the convenience either of the surgeon or his patient. More than once have I known fatal results to arise from this mistaken confidence, this injudicious, not to say rash proceeding; which, though it may be practised perhaps many times without any untoward result, is certain eventually not only to end in the compromise of the surgeon's reputation, but in what is of much greater moment, the loss of human life.

Prior to the removal of the hæmorrhoidal excrescence it is the duty of every surgeon carefully to survey the various points to which I have alluded; and, above all, cautiously to examine into the condition of the rectum; for, in the early stages of piles, where the disease is accompanied with any contraction of the bowel, we shall often be able to mitigate the former by the removal of the latter; I have seen many instances which confirm this observation.

CEANOTHUS AMERICANUS.

[THE Southern Medical Journal copies from our Journal of the 30th Sept. last, the remarks of our correspondent, Dr. D. H. Hubbard, on the remedial powers of the above-named article, and adds the following valuable information. We would particularly invite correspondents and readers to furnish us with the results of their experience in the use of indigenous vegetable productions. There is a remissness in this respect which is unworthy the members of a liberal profession, and which ought to be speedily abandoned.]

We are pleased to see such articles as the above, brought before the public by industrious and faithful observers—articles with which our country abounds; and as valuable as, not to say more so, in many instances, than those which are imported at great cost and trouble.

Distance and cost seeming to place a peculiar value on others of their kind, whereby we are often decoyed into a preference for them; the bounties of Providence by which we are surrounded are but too often contemned or disregarded.

The *Ceanothus Americanus* is one of the most abundant of the small shrubs found on our dry sandy soils. In this section of the country it is known to all the country people by the common names, Red Root, Red Shank, &c.; and were its virtues well known amongst practitioners, it is sufficiently abundant to be made an article of commerce, of comfortable profit to its preservers.

In situations remote from medical aid, and, indeed, in most families in the country, it is in constant successful use as a styptic and astringent.