

ON THE SURGICAL LESSONS OF THE LATE WAR.

By Dr. ASTERISK, A.M., M.D., LL.D.

SPECULATION on the great advances in Medicine and Surgery, which have been or will be made as results of the late war, and the statistics and reports derived therefrom, is now a favorite topic in medical journalism. Progress has undoubtedly been made. It seems to be established, that cerebro-spinal meningitis causes spots on the skin, and generally kills the patient; glycerine has been placed on the Army Supply Table; a new edition of the Dispensatory is out; and we are taught in the New Eclectic Magazine of June, 1869,* that a gangrenous limb may be cured by ligating its chief artery. By the aid of the microscope we have learned that the ulcers in typhoid fever are due to the removal of tissue; and the Photographic Series of the Army Medical Museum shows conclusively that, when a ball strikes a bone, it sometimes breaks it, and occasionally comminutes it, and also that it does not necessarily penetrate it. There also appears to be little doubt that in amputations of the thigh, the patient often dies in a few days; that while he survives, his heart beats faster than usual, and the injured bone is found to be red and soft, and not green and hard. It has also been discovered that if a wound be thoroughly cleansed and washed with nitric acid, buttermilk, permanganate of potassa, or bromine, it will not infrequently remain a healthy granulating surface. In a few cases pure water is used for this purpose with satisfactory results. It is my desire to call the attention of the profession to a remedy, which in my hands has proved to be of the greatest value, as the statistics which I shall offer in a future article will irrefragably prove. This preparation, of such general applicability, is the *ichthyocollæ preparata Spaldingii*, a readily accessible and well-known solution. My attention was first called to its utility in the case of General Jones, of which I give the following brief history:—Second Lieutenant and Brevet Major General Jedediah H. Jones, U.S.V., aged 22 years and 3 months, having been previously of a healthy constitution, was taken suddenly ill on the morning of May 3d, 1863, as he was about to lead his command in a charge upon the enemy's lines at Chancellorsville. He complained of great pain in the abdomen, of repeated desire for micturition, of a fluttering sensation at the heart, of weakness in the legs.

His countenance was pale, his pulse was 102 $\frac{1}{2}$, and small and weak. I gave him six ounces of brandy, containing in solution one drachm of ichthyocollæ, which immediately brought him to the sticking point. Immediately after he had taken the medicine, an aide-de-camp informed him that the attack was not to be made, and the general rode off to his quarters as well as ever.

The details of the following case have been very kindly furnished me by one of the most scientific and careful observers of the regular staff:—Private A. B., 120th Rhode Island Volunteers, aged 45 years, was admitted to hospital on June 12th, 1863, with an incised wound on the left thumb, three-eighths of an inch in length, and averaging half a line in depth. The constitutional symptoms were slight. The hæmorrhage had not been excessive. There was little shock. The pulse was almost normal. After consultation it was decided to attempt to preserve the limb. The wound being carefully cleansed, its edges were placed in apposition, and strips of linen, moistened with ichthyocollæ preparata Spaldingii were carefully applied. No vessels required ligature. The arm having been placed in a splint, the patient was put to bed, and in three-quarters of an hour had so far recovered as to be able to eat a bowl of stewed oysters, and in one week was able to accept a furlough of thirty days. In the incipient stage of alopecia, this remedy, if freely applied, will rarely fail to stop the progress of the disease. In diarrhœa, its wonderful power of controlling symptoms ever elicits the admiration of those who witness its effects. In this complaint, it is to be applied with a fine camel's hair brush over and around the anus. If the case be choleraic in character, a small portion may be used as an enema. The applicability of this remedy in hæmorrhoids, varicose veins, psoas abscess, compound fracture, and aneurisms, are so obvious that it is unnecessary to dilate upon it. In penetrating wounds of the chest, it would be found a satisfactory substitute for the means of hermetically sealing, suggested by one of the most profound of modern military surgeons. I desire particularly to call the attention of the profession to the method of using this invaluable agent in one of the most annoying of all diseases that come under the observation of the military surgeon. I refer to chronic rheumatism. The patient should be swathed in bandages saturated with ichthyocollæ preparata Spaldingii, from his shoulders to his toes. They should be applied in triple layers, and very firmly, so as to prevent

* Vol. iv., No. 6, page 709.

the motion of any joint. The chin should then be firmly attached to the chest by roller bandages, fastened around the head and passed in a figure-of-eight under the arms. The face should then be covered with compresses of at least twelve layers. The patient should then be fed on plain mush without salt, and should be permitted to receive visitors. If this plan is faithfully carried out, the patient will usually desire to rejoin his regiment in about six days, a result unattainable by any of the methods of treatment heretofore employed. In many cases in which opiates are counter-indicated, this remedy is unsurpassed as a soporific. If properly applied to the eyelids, a repetition of the remedy is rarely called for. When combined with the subnitrate of bismuth, or with minnium, or chalk, this agent furnishes one of our most desirable cosmetics. I have not employed the remedy in traumatic tetanus; but in this affection it deserves an impartial trial. In all excisions and amputations it should invariably be applied to the cut surface, to prevent purulent absorption, and as a ready hæmostatic. In brief, the outfit of a military surgeon or of a medical man in civil practice should never be considered complete without this remedy. It is to be hoped that it will soon be placed upon the Army Supply Table. Four gallons would be about a three months' supply for one hundred men. This preparation of *ichthyocollæ preparata* Spaldingii is sold in the shops under the name of Spalding's Glue.

HYDRATE OF CHLORAL.

By J. L. W.

I SUBMIT the following case without comment:—

Capt. W. R., mariner, æt. 30, was attacked, on the passage home from India, with dysenteric symptoms; not severe at first, but continuing without abatement for six months, until his arrival in Boston. Here he grew worse; and, being called to see him, I found symptoms of chronic hepatitis, as well as severe pain and tenderness in the rectum and colon, as high as the transverse part. This was much increased at the times of defæcation, the stools being scanty, very offensive, and occasionally mingled with blood (attributable, no doubt, to hæmorrhoids, from which he suffered). Paroxysms of vomiting, with severe spasms of the stomach and diaphragm, occurred every three or four days. These last-

ed for two or three hours, causing acute suffering and increasing prostration. Opium, even in full doses, seemed rather to aggravate than relieve the symptoms, and its consequences compelled its abandonment. The customary substitutes for this anodyne were tried, with a similar negative result, as were also the measures suggested at two consultations with physicians of this city, held at the instance of anxious relatives. Bromide of potassium twice caused such distress and vomiting that a third trial was not to be thought of. As a forlorn hope (for I distrust new remedies), I procured some hyd. chloral (made in Göttingen), took thirty grains of it in an ounce of water, and finding no bad effects from the dose, gave my patient, on the accession of the next paroxysm, as soon as I was called in, fifty (50) grains, followed in ten minutes by forty (40) more. A third dose of forty (40) grains, in fifteen minutes, relieved my patient from all sense of pain, and in a few minutes he was in a quiet sleep, the first he had known for days. At my next visit (in seven hours), he had just awakened; complained of a slight headache, which soon passed away on ventilating the room, which was excessively close, and full of a heavy odor reminding one of chloroform, and yet quite distinct from that drug. He presently asked for food, which he took with relish and retained, to my great surprise.

He had not another paroxysm of vomiting, the stomach became tolerant both of food and medicine, and the case progressed, though slowly, to convalescence.

In about five weeks he was able to go home to Maine, and I have since heard from him that he is quite well.

I refrained from reporting this somewhat remarkable case until satisfied that the improvement was not merely temporary.

I never saw more speedy and complete relief from intense suffering, excepting in complete anæsthesia.

HYDRATE OF CHLORAL IN PHRENITIS.

By a Correspondent in Virginia.—Communicated by D. F. LINCOLN, M.D.

S. P., æt. about 25; bilious temperament; unmarried; suffering from phthisis pulmonalis, induced by the loss of right arm at the shoulder during the late war, and the exposure and hardships of campaigning.

Jan. 25th.—Was called to see him, and found him in violent delirium. Pulse 125; head very hot; violent pulsations of the