the Commission which has collected and condensed the facts and prepared the statement of the case, and the Executive who has to act in the premises, can have no feeling other than for the good of those for whom the bounty of Government was specially intended, and no object in view other than to carry out the beneficent designs of Congress, it is to be hoped that the determination, whatever it may be, will meet the cheerful acquiescence of all concerned.

All which is respectfully submitted.

(Signed)

THO. LAWSON, *Surgeon-general.*

OBSERVATIONS ON TRAUMATIC TETANUS.

BY JAMES B. THOMPSON, A.B., M.D.

It is a peculiarity in this disease, well worthy of notice, in a practical point of view, that it does not present itself at the early inflammatory, suppurative, or sloughing stages of a wound or injury, but more frequently at a very remote period, when the part injured may have healed over, and when the surgeon may have considered his patient as convalescent—or if an hospital patient, may be about to discharge him or her. In illustration of this peculiarity in tetanus, I may be permitted to add the following case.

A young man, about 19 years of age, of nervous temperament, but otherwise of good general health, received, while in the act of grooming a horse, a kick in the left knee; the cork of the shoe laid open the capsule of the knee-joint, and lacerated the integuments. Severe inflammatory symptoms supervened, but by active antiphlogistic remedies, and attention to the general constitution, these acute symptoms were subdued, and the wound was healed over in about the fifth week, when it was thought desirable to recommend the patient to go into the country for the benefit of his general health. But just the day but one previous to his intended departure, he complained of being unwell, and rather restless for the few nights before. He now complained of stiffness in the neck, and from this period all the symptoms of traumatic tetanus began to present themselves. He got anodynes with morphia at night. I prefer the muriate of morphia in these cases. Mercury was used by friction, along the spine, the inside of the thighs, and in the axillæ, with small and frequently-repeated doses of calomel with opium, to prevent its passing off by the bowels, besides its own sedative effect: camphor mixture, with the aromatic spirits of ammonia, occasionally. This treatment was pursued for some ten or twelve days, when the tetanic tendency seemed gradually to disappear. The patient was discharged quite convalescent in about a week after all medicines had ceased to be given. He did not seem to suffer any inconvenience from the active treatment pursued, as some surgeons seem to suppose such patients always do.

The period at which this affection generally presents itself, varies from a few days to ten, fifteen and twenty-one days, and from four to six weeks, or even to remoter periods. However, I am disposed to look rather favorably on a case going beyond the third week: at least I am

inclined to think that the remoter the period the more mild and modified will be the attack—indeed rarely fatal, if actively treated at first.

As to the causes of this disease, there are a great variety, and some are of a very trivial character. It has been known to occur in a negro from the lash of a whip. Pieces of glass, wood, nails, pins, &c., sticking in the hands or soles of the feet, or under the finger or toe nails, have produced this affection. The more aggravated exciting causes are, vicissitudes of temperature, injuries or lacerations of nervous or tendinous structures, punctured wounds, irritating substances in the stomach and intestinal canal.

I have seen tetanus in a modified form in a lunatic, proving that affections of the mind predispose to this disease. I have also seen it in persons where the autopsies proved that abnormal depositions, or growths of a bony or cartilaginous structure, gave rise to this affection, particularly when these foreign bodies (if I may be allowed to call them so), by their presence and consequent pressure on the brain and spinal marrow, operated, no doubt, as a proximate cause in the production of the modified tetanic symptoms which exhibited themselves during the life-time of these patients. As to the mode of treatment, it no doubt must vary according to the circumstances of the case, and the previous history of the patient. It is advisable to remove as early as possible the obvious exciting cause; next to this, I believe that the treatment pursued in the preceding case will be found to be the most generally resorted to, and from what I have seen or read has been found to have been the most successful. Tobacco enemata are recommended, and may no doubt be found useful; but as for the cold bath, or douche, I have seen it prejudicial, and it is always unpleasant to the patient.

Our object should be to allay the generally-excited state of the brain and nervous system; and in carrying this view into effect, we must often commence by exciting, as it were, a new and powerful action, as if to supersede the primary or diseased one. This is, I apprehend, the view with which mercury, tobacco, musk, camphor and opium, with other active antispasmodics, are so generally recommended. In cases of punctured wounds producing this disease, it is desirable to dilate freely the original injury or puncture; and in cases arising from any local irritation, no time should be lost in severing the communication with the brain and part engaged, as if to arrest the progress of this disease.

As to the use of stimulating or antispasmodic liniments or applications, I have never seen, even in extensive hospital practice, in civil or military departments, any beneficial results; I would rather be inclined to look upon them as worse than useless: for while the surgeon may be getting these ready for use, he might in my mind be much better employed in attending to more salutary and sure remedies, and to what are known to be attended with much more efficacious and successful results, to persons who have suffered from, and had been the subjects of tetanus in any form.

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