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NITRATE OF SILVER IN SOME INFLAMMATORY AFFECTIONS OF THE MUCOUS MEMBRANES OF THE MOUTH AND FAUCES.

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At a time when the exhibition of mercury is recommended in so many complaints, the following account of the treatment of some of the evil consequences which supervene upon the affection of the system, produced by this powerful agent, will not, I trust, be wholly unacceptable. Nor are the bad effects to which I allude dependent merely upon the inordinate use of this remedy ; small doses, in some instances, having caused ptyalism, when no such influence on the system was intended by the prescriber. Having frequently observed the great length of time which generally elapsed before ulcerations of the mucous membrane of the mouth, occurring during ptyalism, would yield to the common astringent or stimulant applications, although assisted by that constitutional treatment which the circumstances of the case appeared to indicate ; and having also had numerous opportunities of estimating the comparative advantages of different stimulants, when applied to the mucous surface of the conjunctiva, owing to my connection with the Eye Institution ; I was induced, by the analogy of structure existing between these membranes, to conclude that the nitrate of silver, which has proved, after repeated trials, the best stimulant in certain affections of the conjunctiva, might be resorted to with advantage in similar diseases of the mucous membrane of the *mouth*.

In the first case in which this plan was adopted, the mouth had been only three days affected ; there was great tumefaction of the mucous surface of the lips, gums, and inside of the cheeks, which were also suffering from several small sloughy ulcerations ; and several quarts of fluid had drained from the mouth during the day. The ulcers were freely touched with the solid nitrate. Next day the swelling had entirely subsided, the sloughs separated, and the salivary secretion was very much diminished. A single repetition, after an interval of two days, was sufficient to restore the affected parts to a healthy state. The constitutional treatment consisted of saline purgatives and diluent beverage. Since that period, I have applied the same remedy, with an equally successful result, in a considerable number of cases, in all of which ulceration had commenced. This effect has indeed occurred so uniformly, as to justify me in recommending the treatment with confidence. The following was one of the most severe affections of this description :—

W. A., a painter, æt. 26, was seized, September 1st, 1832, with all the symptoms of colica pictorum, which yielded, in the course of three

days, to the employment of general bleeding, purgatives, and the external application of spt. terebinth. to the abdomen. During this time he took twenty-six grains of calomel, in combination with purgatives, which acted powerfully on the bowels.

3d.—In the evening, his mouth having become slightly affected, he was ordered saline purgatives, and a solution of the nitrate as a lotion.

4th.—As the lotion had discolored the teeth, the solutio alum. cum tr. capsici was substituted.

5th.—Several small sloughy patches appeared on the inside of both lips, which, together with the gums and cheeks, were much swollen, and the salivary secretion very copious. The nitrate was freely applied to the ulcerated parts of the lips.

6th.—Lips much better ; mucous membrane of both cheeks sloughy ; tongue very much enlarged, and covered with sloughy ulceration, preventing, by its size, any ocular examination of the fauces. But reasoning from the difficulty of swallowing, and the pain caused by pressure on the larynx, would lead to the conclusion that the mucous membranes of the fauces, and upper parts of the pharynx, were in a similar condition. There is now an immense draining of salivary fluid, and such a degree of suffering that he cannot be prevailed on to take anything except water and his medicine. Nitrate, applied to the lower surface of the tongue, and inner surface of the cheeks, for the first time, and repeated to the worst lip.

7th.—The nitrate having been too freely applied, and having, consequently, caused considerable pain for some hours afterwards, was not repeated to-day, but he was ordered to use a warm opiate lotion.

8th.—Much better, except the under surface of the tongue, which had not become inflamed until the 6th ; swelling and salivary secretion much diminished. Nitrate applied sparingly to the tongue. Opiate lotion continued.

9th.—Improving ; no farther occasion for the nitrate.

12th.—To-day I met him walking out. Mouth quite well ; salivary secretion natural.

It may be proper to add, that saline purgatives were given daily ; and that in both instances the patient was desired not to swallow the saliva after the caustic had been applied.

Since the occurrence of these cases, I have followed the same plan of treatment in inflammation of the fauces, accompanied by enlargement of the tonsils ; and although in many instances the disease has been of that acute character in which local depletion is invariably adopted, and which frequently terminates in suppuration,—and although the nitrate was applied in the commencement, unassisted by any other local remedy,—the disease was brought to a speedy termination without any formation of pus taking place. I have also tried the caustic in four cases of scarlatina anginosa, in one of which, occurring in a boy, æt. eight years, the tonsils were so much enlarged, that by a single introduction of the pencil the caustic was applied to both tonsils ; and after one repetition, the swelling subsided. In the others, a single application was sufficient to produce a favorable result.

I have hitherto principally alluded to the local advantage to be gained by the employment of this remedy, viz. the removal of the inflammatory affection of the mucous membranes connected with the mouth and fauces. But I consider the speedy termination of increased salivary secretion thus produced, a circumstance of equal, or even still greater importance. Instances occasionally occur in which ptyalism continues, in spite of all treatment, whether local or constitutional, for such a length of time as to reduce the sufferer to a deplorable state of debility, from which he never entirely recovers, although existence may be prolonged for a few years. And in such cases, there is frequently no ulceration, nor even any active inflammation present; or, if in the first instance these circumstances have existed, they are now no longer to be found, the tongue and inner surface of the mouth being only slightly tumid, and the gums spongy. But the salivary glands seem incapable of returning to their natural action; and although the stimulus which caused the inordinate secretion may have been long withdrawn, the habit has been too firmly fixed to be easily eradicated. The draining of saliva continues for months, or even years, producing the lamentable consequences already noticed. The records of pathology also supply us with similar instances, although differently produced. I refer to idiopathic ptyalism—an affection no less obstinate in its course, nor less serious in its effects, than salivation produced by the exhibition of mercury. I have not met with any case of such long-continued affections since I have adopted the method of treatment by nitrate of silver (a period of nearly three years); but a deliberate view of the evidence of its beneficial influence, afforded by those instances in which it has been employed, would, I think, justify a rather sanguine anticipation of its effects in these cases also, in which I should therefore recommend it to be cautiously used.

The manner of employing the nitrate may be collected from the preceding report, with the addition of the following limitations. Should the patient complain of very severe pain, continuing for some hours after the application, this will have arisen from its either having been too freely, or not sufficiently accurately applied. Such being the case, and the disease still continuing, the remedy must not be again resorted to for two or three days. When the ulceration, tumefaction, and salivary secretion, have been considerably lessened by the first application, a repetition may not be necessary; or it will at least be desirable to wait a few days, in which time the affection will frequently have so far subsided as to render the further employment of the nitrate not only useless but decidedly injurious. I have more than once observed the ill effects of persevering too long in this treatment; and I can safely state, that not even the most severe affections will require more than eight or ten applications—seldom so many. The pain is trifling, unless when the application is so freely used as not only to affect the diseased but also the surrounding healthy structures; and there is this variation—that when the tongue, gums, inner surface of the lips, and of the cheeks, are affected, the pain caused by the nitrate is much greater than that produced by its application to the uvula, tonsils, or fauces. In these latter instances the sensation scarcely deserves the name of pain.

These observations are intended to refer to the diseased structures

only ; for if applied in the same manner to similar parts in a healthy condition, the pain is frequently very acute, the nitrate then acting as an excitant of inflammation, which identical application, in the former instance, produced (however paradoxical it may appear) the subsidence of that inflammation which already existed.

I am fully aware that the nitrate in solution has been frequently recommended in similar affections ; but it will be found upon trial to cause as much suffering as when applied in substance : and requiring to be much more frequently repeated, before the desired effect is obtained, constitutes an important objection to this mode of its employment.

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REMARKS ON THE USE OF BLISTERS IN PREVENTING ABORTION.

BY LUNSFORD P. YANDALL, M.D.

ABORTION is one of the most serious evils incident to a state of pregnancy. Apart from the immediate danger accompanying it, arising out of the tendency to hæmorrhage, it is apt, having occurred more than once, to become a settled action of the system—parturient efforts recur at a stated period, and it is difficult to induce the uterus to bear its burden beyond that period. The hopes of parents are disappointed, and the health of the mother falls ultimately a sacrifice to repeated miscarriages. It is therefore a matter of great moment to correct a habit fraught with so much mischief.

It is well known that the common treatment in such cases is often ineffectual. Bleeding on the access of pains, and especially of hæmorrhage, will sometimes arrest the disposition to abortion, and the prospect of its success is greater as it is more promptly resorted to, and the number of miscarriages has been fewer. The recumbent posture is of the utmost consequence, as well as the avoidance of all mechanical violence, and all excessive mental emotions. Where the habit of the female is nervous, irritable and delicate, much may be done during the intervals between conception, in giving strength and tone to the system, by exercise in the open air, and a departure from the artificial mode of living by which such a habit is formed. If, on the contrary, an undue fulness of the system characterize the patient, the use of purgatives, a vegetable diet, and moderate exercise, may correct the tendency. But where they all fail, and the habit has seemed to have been confirmed, I have known the remedy about to be mentioned succeed in averting a threatened abortion.

A lady in the eighth month of utero-gestation, having enjoyed good health, was seized with profuse hæmorrhage from the womb, without any evident cause, and without premonition. Miscarriage followed in a few hours. Her health was impaired by the premature confinement and loss of blood, and she did not again conceive for a year. Things promised well until she reached the period at which the previous abortion had occurred, when in spite of all the usual means, labor came on, and she was delivered of an eight month's child. In three months she was