

the bowels, I have seen much benefit arise from the use of gentle purgatives. Moreover, let me remark, that even when there appears to be so great a degree of debility that the administration of a purgative might, by causing still greater debility, prove injurious, the reverse will, I have reason to think, be generally found to result. Instead of the apprehended collapse, we shall have the gratification of observing some evidence of the restoration of a more healthy and vigorous function.

We have no difficulty in comprehending how a smart cathartic, at an early period of the affection, is of benefit, but it is not easy to conceive how purgation can have a similar effect in an exhausted state of the system. It is a point deserving an attempt at explanation, and might possibly be dwelt upon at some length with advantage, but as such a course would be foreign to the design of this letter, I shall, although under fear of being imperfectly understood, dismiss the subject in as few words as possible. Abstraction of food must cause impairment of the function of nutrition. There cannot be the usual amount of new matter deposited in the various tissues of the body; but although there be not a due supply of new particles, it is presumable that there is no diminution in the separation of the old, and that the usual amount of cast-off particles circulates in the blood, awaiting their discharge from the system by the excretory organs. Diminution of food necessarily causes a diminution in the passage of matter through the intestinal canal, consequently the discharge of particles separated from the various tissues, and destined to be expelled from the system, is in a great measure impeded. The detention of such matters, either in the blood-vessels or in the intestinal tube, will exercise, I imagine, a poisonous influence, and cause a low and typhoid condition of the whole animal economy. All the functions will be feebly performed, and amongst the rest the appetite for food will be destroyed.

Such being my views of the pathological condition, I believe the following to be the *rationale* of the practice that I am now recommending, in the case of patients who are much reduced, and in whom there are also many symptoms of a low febrile condition, namely, that by the administration of gentle purgatives we cause the discharge of those matters which have been accumulating in the intestinal tube, and have been exercising a depressing influence on all the functions of the body.

So much of my time, and, I fear, of your space, has been occupied by the foregoing considerations that I must omit to notice the various devices which a good tactician will not fail to put in force in conjunction with his other remedies. I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

G. L.

November 14, 1842.

NATURE AND TREATMENT OF SPLENTS IN HORSES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

Sir,—In THE LANCET for Nov. 5th, page 223, there is a quotation from the "Veterinarian" on the cure of splents in horses; but, lest an injudicious use of the means therein proposed for the cure of splents should occur, I consider it of some importance to your readers (two-thirds of whom are probably interested in that noble and, to us, indispensable animal, the horse) to offer you some observations on the nature and treatment of this disease, as it is miscalled.*

Nature of the affection.—If the reader will take the trouble to examine the shank, or cannon bone, of a four-year old horse which has done no work, he will find two thin, or splent, bones attached one on each side of the cannon bone, and running parallel with it. Tracing them from their small end upwards, their heads will be found to form a portion of the knee-joint, especially on the inner side; for the head of that splent-bone being larger than the other, it offers a more extensive articulating surface for the small bones (analogous to the human carpus) which compose the joint, and therefore "splents" are usually found on the inner side of the legs.

The natural bond of union between the cannon and splent-bones is an elastic membraniform substance, intended to abate the shock which might otherwise be given to the shaft of this bone by the rapid movements of the animal, and, consequently, to the sensitive parts of the inferior joints.

I should premise, that all young bones, or bones which, from the youth of the animal, cannot have received their due form, are much more vascular than adult bones. Let us now imagine the legs of this colt to be over-weighted by a rider, to be taken from the turf whereon he was foaled, and made to travel, week after week, at a quick pace, along a turnpike road. What would any reader expect to be the result? An inflammatory action in the vessels of both fore-legs; an attempt on the part of the vis medicatrix naturæ to defend the long cannon bone from being injuriously jarred, by strengthening its sides. Periosteal and ossific matter become poured out from and about the elastic intervening material of the cannon and splent bones, and especially the inner one, from its greater share in the formation of the knee-joint. The periosteum becomes distended by this new and foreign substance, stretched, and forming a band upon it, and is soon rendered very tender; and this is the first sign the owner generally has of the approaching splent. Within six months, if

* Here is a "wrinkle" for veterinarians, in a *medical journal*, as well as for every surgeon who keeps his horse.—*Lancet*.

the horse continue his work, that which was at first periosteal and fibrinous becomes ossific, uniting the splent and cannon bone together, and forming, in truth, nature's additional splent, attached in a manner to the moveable bones, which laughs to scorn our adjustment of splents on a fracture. Will the reader now discard his horse as unsound, *diseased*; or will he not rather admire the protecting power of nature, which she has so ingeniously employed to defend a dumb animal from the unreasonable treatment of a reasoning and talking one?

If I have succeeded in pointing out correctly the nature of this so-called *disease*, would it not be better to leave our horse in wiser hands than our own, and take the boon of the splent in lieu of inflammation of the feet and small joints? When the horse has arrived at seven or eight years old, nature has usually done with the old splent, and it becomes absorbed; if not, this deposit may be removed in two or three months by the application of a very simple liniment.

Its treatment.—Instruct your groom to rub, night and morning, during five minutes, into a circle of two inches from the centre of the splent, enough of the following liniment* to thoroughly wet the hair; in a few days some scurf will be seen amongst the hair of the part; let him then proceed with the liniment, with caution, turning the hair against its course to observe if the skin is giving off a little moisture; if so, discontinue the rubbing until the skin is become dry; re-commence and re-omit the infrication according to the state of the skin. The removal of the eye-sore called "splent" will be effected probably within the above period. I have removed a splent of old standing in a horse aged 14 within three months by this means. Now it becomes necessary to say, were the treatment by binding on lead, as mentioned in your former number, to be adopted in the supposed case of this colt's splent, inflammation of a more serious character would, in all probability, be thereby excited, I have witnessed this disaster in one well-marked case, and I have heard of it in others, and it is with the hope of preventing my favourite animal from being unnecessarily tortured by such treatment, and, in short, for the cause of philipposity, which induces me to trouble you with this communication.

The splent, or, rather, the exostosis, mentioned in the "Veterinarian," is a very different affection from the above, though easily mistaken for it. In that *disease*, occasioned by natural malposition of the horse's fore-legs, or from bad shoeing, he strikes one or both cannon bones with his hoofs or shoes, and that is the origin of this misnamed splent.

* R *Oil of origanum, oil of turpentine, of each, ℥j; rectified spirits of wine, ℥ss. Mix. Make a liniment.*

Here, again, the above treatment will suffice for its removal, defending the leg during the cure with an India-rubber boot. But the lead compress is a clumsy, useless, and probably dangerous application; still it may be tried when the liniment fails, which will seldom happen.

I have now acquitted myself of my kindly intention towards my equine companions for these twenty years, and in their name I solicit forgiveness for having thus far intruded on your valuable pages.

T. CHIRURGUS.

Worcester, Nov. 12, 1842.

PREVENTION OF SORE NIPPLES.

To the Editor.—Sir: I think that sore nipples would seldom occur did mothers pursue the plan which I always advise to my female friends on occasions of suckling, namely, after the child has left the breast to wipe the nipple very dry, and apply to it a piece of linen cloth. I have had much practice amongst the ladies for the last twelve years, and never had a case of sore nipple where this plan was adopted. Although it may appear to be a trifling communication, yet trifles are not to be despised, especially in the obstetric department of medicine; they lead to more practical advantage than a great deal of the theoretical nonsense of the present age. Your obedient servant,

T. C. WOOD, M.R.C.S., L.A.C.

Surgeon to the Reading Dispensary.

London-street, Reading,

Nov. 1842.

THE COURSES ON ANATOMY.

WITHIN the last few years a silent change has been admitted in the anatomico-physiological studies in the medical schools, and though there are still, I understand, some schools where the old arrangement prevails, the improvement is of such obvious convenience that it can scarcely fail to be ultimately adopted by all. The alteration referred to is that of associating, on the one hand, under the title of "descriptive and surgical anatomy," the *larger* anatomy of the body, with its relations to the casualties and operations of practical surgery, and, on the other, as "general anatomy and physiology," the *smaller*, the intimate structure of parts, with the laws of their growth and living functions. The useful tendency of this change would be most completely accomplished, and the latter course rendered both more philosophical and more practical, if it were made utterly to avoid distributive anatomy (which it should suppose already learned), and to include general pathology and the history of morbid products.—*Mr. J. Simon on Medical Education.*