

MUSTARD POULTICES APPLIED EXTENSIVELY TO THE SURFACE.

By William O. Baldwin, M.D., of Montgomery, Alabama.

THE application of poultices as a remedial agent in many forms of local inflammations, spasmodic pains, &c., has long been practised and highly appreciated, as not the least efficacious among the many sanative agents available in such cases. By some they have been and are still used with reference solely to the specific virtues of the substances of which they are composed, whilst others esteem them all for their one common virtue —attributing to them no other curative effect than that which arises from their capability of retaining warmth and moisture about the parts to which they are applied. Both of these views, as to their *modus operandi*, are probably correct; for the results which follow the endermic use of medicine undoubtedly establish the truth of the former: while all can attest the good results which are frequently obtained from the application of *simple* poultices to inflamed and painful parts, which of course can be attributed to nothing more than the relaxation afforded by the warmth and moisture which they contain. It is for this property of the poultice, added to the increased revulsive effect of the mustard, when combined, that I propose to extend their use to acute diseases, involving the whole animal economy.

From the marked success which has attended the application of mustard poultices to the entire, or greater portion of the surface of the body and extremities, in the treatment of some diseases of an idiopathic character, I am disposed to regard them as a remedy of more value than their hitherto partial use would seem to indicate; for although highly esteemed and extensively employed in certain *local* affections, so far as I am aware their application has been restricted to such diseases, or when used in those involving a greater extent of tissue they have been applied only to combat some local symptom.

The experience which I have had with the mustard leads me to look upon it as a remedy peculiarly applicable to diseases of a congestive type, and more especially to *congestive fever*. I have found it a most prompt and available remedy in one or two instances in which I have used it in *convulsions* occurring in children; and I have also applied it advantageously in some cases of *visceral inflammation*. In a case of *trismus nascentium* in which I used it, there was a considerable abatement of the disease under its influence; but as the violent symptoms afterwards returned and the case terminated fatally, it cannot be considered as furnishing any testimony in support of its efficacy in that class of diseases. I believe, however, that if my directions had been carried out during the 12 hours of remission and comparative ease which the little sufferer seemed to enjoy immediately after the application of the poultice, which would have brought it fully under the influence of opium, it might have succeeded. That, however, is a bare supposition; but I was so well pleased with the effect which followed its application, that, though the case proved fatal, taking into consideration the very unsatisfactory results

which have generally followed the treatment of that disease, I shall test its efficacy further should a suitable occasion offer.

From its powerful agency in producing diaphoresis, that end so often coveted in the treatment of *synochal fevers*, I am induced to believe the mush poultice, with or without the mustard, applied in this way, might form a valuable adjuvant in the treatment of that class of diseases.

These remarks are not intended to depreciate the value of free internal medication. Indeed, in most of the cases in which I have used the poultice it has been in conjunction, or at least not to the exclusion of any other remedy which might have been thought available—so that one who may be disposed to cavil, might with some plausibility dispute its agency in producing the beneficial results which I have ascribed to it. Nevertheless, in a great majority of cases in which I have resorted to it, in the diseases alluded to, its effect has been so apparent, that notwithstanding the administration of other remedies, at the same time, no one could mistake its promptly favorable influence. And it frequently happens that our only means of making an impression upon the disease is through the agency of external applications. As, in *cerebral congestions* attended with coma and insensibility, it is always difficult, and sometimes even impossible, to administer medicines internally—in such cases the mustard poultice is entitled to the very first and highest consideration, as the remedy most likely to produce the desired objects.

Though this is a remedy of most singular simplicity, yet a few remarks as to the mode which I have adopted, both in its preparation and application, may not be considered inappropriate.

Supposing the patient to be an adult of the ordinary physical proportions—boil about a bushel of meal to a tolerably consistent mush, and spread upon a sheet which has been placed on a wide mattress, the mattress lying on a low bedstead. The mustard, which should be prepared in the mean time, by mixing three bottles with meal, in the proportion of one part of the former to five or six of the latter, and made into a thin batter by the addition of hot water, is then poured over the mush, and the whole covered by a thin sheet. The patient is then placed about the middle of the poultice, the sides of which are folded over him—completely enveloping every part except the head. The mustard applied in this way is rendered much more active, and will redden the skin when diluted in this way to one sixth of its strength, almost as soon as cataplasms of unmixed mustard, and much quicker when applied to cool or cold extremities—consequently, if applied without being blended with some farinaceous substance it would be very likely to produce vesication.

When enveloped in this way, I have never allowed any patient to remain longer than from a quarter to half an hour, but have been governed as to the length of time which they were allowed to remain altogether by the impression made upon the disease, and see no reason why they should not be kept on a much longer time, if necessary ; for, when combined with the mustard in this way, it is much less apt to produce a feeling of faintness and debility than the warm bath. It will sometimes be found inconvenient to use the poultice in this way, for want of proper and ne-

cessary appliances; in the cases of young men, for instance, living in counting-houses and other places where they have but few conveniences. In such instances a less troublesome mode, and one which I have practised in a few instances, is to envelope each limb separately and cover completely the chest and abdomen, from the neck to the pubis, with the poultice prepared in the same way, and spread on large towels. The former mode is much the most powerful, and when practicable, is to be preferred; but I have found the latter to answer a very good purpose in some instances, and from the fact that it can be borne for a much longer time, and with less annoyance to the patient, I think, perhaps, it might be equally efficacious in cases of a less urgent description.

In illustration of these views, I will append a few cases which occurred in my practice, and in which I used the poultice, prepared in the manner described above.

[We omit Dr. B.'s cases. They are four in number, and the patients were of different ages, and suffering under different diseases.]

In a case of *congestive* fever, treated successfully, but which is too tedious to detail at length, I kept the extremities enveloped, and the chest and abdomen covered with the mustard poultices, for 48 hours—re-applying them every 4 or 5 hours.

In the treatment especially of those diseases which depend upon a want of balance in the circulation, and when the structural lesion is not very extensive, the mustard poultice, used as I have recommended it, if not in itself a curative remedy, will, at least, frequently be found a powerful adjuvant.—*Western Medical Journal*.

SINGULAR CASE OF RETAINED FŒTUS.—CYSTITIS IN A COW.

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To the Corresponding Secretary of the National Institute, Washington.

DEAR SIR,—In October last I received from you a notice of my having been elected a corresponding member of the National Institute, and beg leave to take this opportunity of expressing my acknowledgment of the honor thus bestowed; and though my "aid in carrying out the objects of the Institute" may be very feeble, such as I can give, from time to time, will be cheerfully rendered.

At present I propose to report to you a case of considerable interest, and of uncommon occurrence, which has come within the range of my practice.

On Sunday morning, the 23d of April last, I was called to see Mrs. Fletcher, who, it was said, had been in labor since the afternoon of the preceding Friday. I found her in an extremely feeble condition: skin cool; pulse small and quick; complaining of excruciating pain in the abdomen (particularly on the right side) whenever she was moved; and unable to lie upon the left side more than a few moments at a time, in consequence of the severe pain thereby produced in the right. She also complained of nausea, and of considerable soreness and burning at the epigas-