

EXCISION OF THE KNEE-JOINT.

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Wm. H., laborer, 20 years of age, leuco-phlegmatic constitution. In February, 1853, while at work in the woods, he found his right knee "getting stiff," as he said. This symptom increased from day to day, so that he was obliged after a few days to give up work, and lie still for three or four weeks. He then went to work again, and continued at work for about a fortnight, when his knee troubled him so much that he was obliged to quit work again. On the 2d of April, 1853, he entered the Massachusetts General Hospital, where he remained for three weeks, after which he was well enough to work on a farm, until June, 1854, at which time his knee became again so painful and stiff that he entered the hospital a second time. Under the use of issues, &c., he recovered the use of his limb sufficiently to go to work again for a month. He called on me in September, 1854, with some return of the inflammatory symptoms about the joint. I advised him to take a voyage to Ireland, which he did, and remained about four months in that country, among his friends. On his return, he showed me his knee, which seemed to be almost perfectly well. I cautioned him to use it carefully, and advised him to work in the open air. He went on to a farm, and continued at farm work until April, 1856, at which time he came to the city, and drove a team until Aug. 29th, 1856, when one day, in walking along the sidewalk, he fell through a scuttle, producing an injury of the joint which had been in trouble before, and causing an inflammation which laid him up for 6 weeks; after which, he got about again and drove his team for a month. But inflammation coming on again, he was laid up all winter, and on the 5th of May, 1857, he entered the Hospital by my advice.

On the 6th of May, after having the case represented to him, he decided to have excision of the joint performed. At the time of his entrance, and for some time previous, he had had a discharge of a purulent fluid from a sinus, opening just above the outer hamstring, between it and the external condyle of the femur. The joint was swollen, and somewhat tender. Motion was painful. The foot was everted. He had no cough, and no symptoms of trouble in the chest. His health was somewhat deteriorated by confinement and suffering, but his appetite was fair, and his digestion good.

May 6th, 1857, he was taken to the amphitheatre and fully etherized. The operation was performed by the Γ incisions. It being found difficult to get at the joint without removing the patella, moreover that bone being found much diseased, it was removed; the joint was freely opened, the ends of the bones pushed up, and

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freed from the soft parts, and a bow saw with a very narrow blade, the teeth of which were directed upward, was pushed over the ends of the bones, from which slices were removed, by sawing from behind forward. Finding that there were several cavities, containing tubercular-looking matter, which were left behind, and not wishing to shorten the limb more than was absolutely necessary, I removed these diseased parts with the gouge and gouge-forceps, connecting the cavities thus formed with the exterior of the bone by canals, so as to allow the fluids freely to discharge themselves. The limb was then straightened, and the skin having been brought together with stitches, it was placed in a gutta-percha trough splint, previously fitted to it, with a hole cut corresponding to the ham, to allow the escape of the fluids. The surfaces of the bone came well together, the limb being perfectly straight, and only about an inch shorter than the sound one.

The Hospital Record shows that he had some pain, requiring opiates, and some fever, with acceleration of the pulse, for about a week, at the end of which time suppuration was fully established, amounting, by estimate, to about three ounces per diem. The appetite was good; he was taking beef tea, chicken, &c., with a good relish. Partial union of the skin, by the first intention, took place. He required tonics, porter, and stimulating diet, for something more than a month. At the end of six weeks the bones were found to be united and quite firm, though the patient was timid, and unwilling to allow the limb to be handled without taking hold of it himself.

Three months after the operation he had an injection of nitric acid, diluted with water, for a couple of sinuses which were still open and discharging, and at the bottom of which rough bone could be felt. At that time he walked about the ward on crutches. The injection several times caused inflammation, and some constitutional disturbance, though on the whole it seemed to be useful. The discharge gradually diminished. Several small bits of bone were from time to time removed. He got out of doors, and walked about the grounds in the course of the fourth month, with decided advantage to his health and appetite. He gradually got to using one crutch, then a cane, and at this time he can walk about without any cane. He keeps a fruit-stall at the North End; he buys his own fruit, and walks about town freely. He has this evening ridden to my house, and walked from thence to the meeting, keeping up with me at my ordinary gait when not hurried, and has walked up the two long flights of stairs to this room nearly as fast as I should have done if unaccompanied. There is still a sinus open, from which escapes a small quantity of watery fluid, but it very seldom annoys him. He has had one slight attack of redness and pain since leaving the Hospital, followed by a discharge of pus, from which, however, he entirely recovered in a few days. The bony union is complete and firm.