

assistant to ventilation:" in this division he makes some valuable observations on the construction of fire-places, "with a view to the economization of fuel and the prevention of smoke." In an Appendix he makes some novel remarks and suggestions respecting the ventilation of ships, steamboats, and railway carriages. The book is altogether written in a clear and simple style, and illustrated by a profusion of woodcuts.

The Mineral Waters of Schwalbach. By ADOLPHUS GENTH, M.D. Kreedel, Wiesbaden. 8vo, pp. 141.

THIS work is different from most of those which treat of mineral waters. Dr. Genth professes to write for the profession, and not for the public. He entirely reprobates the *ad captandum* system of writing a so-called medical book, for no other purpose than to catch a few patients. He has succeeded in writing a very useful little work. It would be well if some of the physicians of this country would take pattern by Dr. Genth, and when writing of mineral waters, really strive to give some information to their professional brethren.

A Mirror OF THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY IN THE HOSPITALS OF LONDON.

ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL.

Beneficial Effects of strong Nitric Acid on an Indolent Sore.

(Under the care of Mr. DIXON.)

THERE are very few surgeons who have not had to contend with the difficulty of bringing an indolent ulcer, or sore, to healthy action and final cicatrization; and the very fact of a great number of applications having in turn been extolled, would tend to show that that description of ulcer is but too often unmanageable. When the sore is the consequence of the bursting, or the artificial opening of a bubo in an enfeebled subject, the difficulty is still greater, and the cases are but too many where the most disastrous consequences have followed the existence of a large sore in the groin. Mr. Dixon has lately had under his care a case of indolent ulcer following the opening of a bubo, where the strong nitric acid has promoted a rapid cicatrization, and though it does not necessarily follow that such an application will *constantly* have the same beneficial effect, the report of the case may induce practitioners to have more often recourse to this measure, which seems, at first, of a rather severe nature, especially when it is used in private practice. We are indebted to Mr. Hammond's notes for the details of this case.*

The patient, a tall, spare man, of fair complexion, and a boot-maker by trade, was admitted on the 22nd of January, 1850, under the care of Mr. Dixon, with chancres and buboes. His health had been bad for some time past, and his habits rather intemperate. Six weeks ago, the patient was discharged cured from the Westminster Hospital, where he had been admitted, under the care of Mr. Phillips, for hæmorrhoids and abscess in the groin; he remained eleven weeks in that institution.

About three weeks before his admission into St. Thomas's Hospital, he contracted syphilis; chancres appeared two days after connexion, followed, in four days, by a bubo in the right groin. For these *very rapid* manifestations he applied, as out-patient, at the Westminster Hospital, and took mercury for a fortnight without the gums becoming affected. When admitted into St. Thomas's Hospital, his countenance was pale, his pulse feeble, 90, and he complained of a dull aching pain in the loins, and loss of appetite. On examination, a chancre was

found on each side of the frænum, and a bubo in each groin; that on the right side was about the size of a pigeon's egg, painful, red, and fluctuating; the left one much smaller, unattended with redness, but very tender. Mr. Dixon directed the chancres to be dressed with black wash, and the bubo in the right groin to be opened. The opening thus made in this groin did not show, after the expiration of nine or ten days, any tendency to cicatrization, but discharged a thin, unhealthy pus, whilst the swelling in the left groin was disappearing. The patient was ordered quinine.

About thirteen days after admission, he fell into a low cachectic state; the sore in the right groin, where the bubo had been opened, became larger, and its surface was covered with unhealthy granulations. These appearances, and the weak state of the patient, induced Mr. Dixon to order porter and gin, two ounces of the latter being allowed daily.

The sore in the groin became, however, worse and worse; it assumed a very unhealthy aspect, began to spread in an alarming manner, and presented a pale glassy surface, covered with thin ichor; it was now two inches in length, and half an inch in breadth, with irregular, bluish, and overhanging edges. Mr. Dixon chose strong nitric acid, in the long list of applications which have been recommended in such cases. It was to be applied all round the edge of the sore, so as to include a breadth of half an inch of sound skin all round the margins.

Three days after the application of the nitric acid, the appetite improved; the sore lost its undermined edges, assumed a regular defined border, and the surface looked less indolent. Healthy granulations soon sprang up through the whole extent of the sore, and the chancres on the penis healed. A lotion was now applied, with two minims of nitric acid to the ounce of water.

The general health went on improving; the surface of the sore was covered with minute healthy granulations, and as the healing process was progressing very satisfactorily, Mr. Dixon ordered the edges to be brought together with strips of adhesive plaster; and on the 8th of March, forty-six days after admission, the patient was discharged cured, the cicatrix in the groin not being larger than a good sized pea.

Thus we find that exactly one month after the edges of the sore were destroyed, and the neighbouring parts strongly stimulated by the nitric acid; the ulcer, which began to look very unpromising, was completely cicatrized, having taken on healthy action very soon after the application of the caustic. No especial internal treatment was resorted to, Mr. Dixon's principal aim being to keep up the strength of his patient, whilst he stimulated the indolent ulcer of the groin. We have so often seen the best efforts of the surgeon baffled in cases like this, that we are inclined to give much confidence to the method adopted by Mr. Dixon.

GUY'S HOSPITAL.

Fistula in Ano.—Operation.

(Under the care of Mr. HILTON.)

We had an opportunity, on the 16th of April last, of seeing Mr. Hilton operate for fistula in ano. We were rather anxious to witness the steps of this operation, as we understood that Mr. Hilton would use a very ingenious speculum ani of his invention, which he has very frequently employed in cases of fissures, ulcers, or fistulæ in ano. It is intended to render the division of the sphincter safe, easy of performance, free from risk to the surgeon's fingers, and enables him to see the whole operation.

The patient had, in this instance, suffered from the inconvenience of fistula for some years, and had been operated upon before. The external extremity of the sinus presented but a very small aperture, which was almost closed up by fleshy granulations; and this imperfect opening was situated at an unusual distance from the verge of the anus, being almost two inches to the left of that outlet. This circumstance, therefore, gave the sinuous track communicating with the rectum a considerable length.

Mr. Hilton having desired the patient to kneel on the bed, introduced the speculum into the rectum, and by driving a stream of water through the external opening of the fistula with a syringe, the situation of the internal opening of the sinus was clearly made out, by noticing the spot, within the gut, whence the water rushed out in a stream about the size of a common probe. This fact could not, however, have been clearly ascertained without the assistance of the speculum, which instrument, as invented by Mr. Hilton, we shall now attempt to describe.

It consists of a tube, about three inches long, and closed at

* We accidentally omitted to state, in the report of a case of hernia under the care of Mr. Simon, (see THE LANCET, April 20, 1850, p. 482,) that Mr. Hammond had kindly furnished the particulars.