

apoplexy, and requires nearly the same method of treatment.

In a *stupor*, or defect of touching, which arises from an obstruction of the cutaneous nerves, the patient must first be purged; afterwards such medicines as excite the action of the nerves or stimulate the system may be used. For this purpose, the spirit of hartshorn, *sal volatile oleosum*, horseradish, &c., may be taken inwardly; the disordered parts, at the same time, may be frequently rubbed with fresh nettles or spirit of sal ammoniac. Blistering plasters and sinapisms applied to the parts will likewise be of use, as also warm bathing, especially in the natural hot baths.

CHAPTER XLVI.

OF A SCIRRHUS AND CANCER.

A SCIRRHUS is a hard indolent tumor, seated in some of the glands, as the breasts, the armpits, &c. If the tumor becomes large, unequal, of a livid, blackish, or leaden color, and is attended with violent pain, it gets the name of an *occult cancer*. When the skin is broken, and a *sanies* or ichorous matter of an abominably fetid smell is discharged from the sore, it is called an *open* or *ulcerated cancer*. Persons after the age of forty-five, particularly women, and those who lead an indolent sedentary life, are most subject to this disease.

CAUSES.—This disease is often owing to suppressed evacuations; hence it proves so frequently fatal to women of a gross habit, particularly old maids and widows, about the time when the menstrual flux ceases. It may likewise be occasioned by excessive grief, fear, anger, religious melancholy, or any of the depressing passions. Hence the unfortunate, the choleric, and those persons who devote themselves to a religious life in convents and monasteries, are often afflicted with it. It may also be occasioned by the long-continued use of food that is too hard of digestion or of an acrid nature, by barrenness, celibacy, indolence, cold, blows, friction, pressure, or the like. Women often suffer from the last of these by

means of their stays, which squeeze and compress their breasts so as to occasion great mischief. Sometimes the disease is owing to an hereditary disposition.

SYMPTOMS.—This disorder seems often very trifling at the beginning. A hard tumor about the size of a hazlenut, or perhaps smaller, is generally the first symptom. This will often continue for a long time without seeming to increase or giving the patient great uneasiness; but if the constitution be hurt, or the tumor irritated by pressure or improper treatment of any kind, it begins to extend itself towards the neighboring parts, by pushing out a kind of roots or limbs. It then gets the name of *cancer*, from a fancied resemblance betwixt these limbs and the claws of a crab. The color of the skin begins to change, which is first red, afterwards purple, then bluish, livid, and at last black. The patient complains of heat, with a burning, gnawing, shooting pain. The tumor is very hard, rough, and unequal, with a protuberance or rising in the middle; its size increases daily, and the neighboring veins become thick, knotty, and of a blackish color.

The skin at length gives way, and a thin sharp ichor begins to flow, which corrodes the neighboring parts till it forms a large unsightly ulcer. More occult cancers arise, and communicate with the neighboring glands. The pain and stench become intolerable; the appetite fails; the strength is exhausted by a continual hectic fever; at last, a violent hemorrhage, or discharge of blood, from some part of the body, with faintings or convulsion fits, generally put an end to the miserable patient's life.

REGIMEN.—The diet ought to be light but nourishing. All strong liquors, high-seasoned and salted provisions, are to be avoided. The patient may take as much exercise as he can easily bear, and should use every method to divert thought and amuse his fancy. All kinds of external injury are carefully to be guarded against, particularly of the affected part, which ought to be defended from all pressure, and even from the external air, by covering it with fur or soft flannel.

MEDICINE.—This is one of those diseases for which no certain remedy is yet known. Its progress however may sometimes be retarded, and some of its most disagreeable symptoms mitigated, by proper applications. One misfortune attending the disease is, that the unhappy patient often conceals it too long. Were proper means used in due time, a

cancer might often be cured; but after the disorder has arrived at a certain height, it generally sets all medicine at defiance.

When a scirrhus tumor is first discovered, the patient ought to observe a proper regimen, and to take twice or thrice a week a dose of the common purging mercurial pill. He may likewise be bled; and the part affected may be gently rubbed twice a day with a little of the mercurial ointment, and kept warm with fur or flannel. His food must be light, and he may drink daily an English pint of the decoction of woods or sarsaparilla. I have sometimes discussed hard tumors, which had the appearance of beginning cancers, by a course of this kind.

Should the tumor however not yield to this treatment, but, on the contrary, become larger and harder, it will be proper to extirpate it. Indeed, whenever this can be done with safety, the sooner it is done the better. It can answer no purpose to extirpate a cancer after the constitution is ruined, or the whole mass of humors corrupted by it. This however is the common way, which makes the operation so seldom succeed. Few people will submit to the extirpation till death stares them in the face; whereas, if it were done early, the patient would be in no danger of losing his life by the operation, and it would generally prove a radical cure.

When the cancer is so situated that it cannot be cut off, or if the patient will not submit to the operation, such medicines as will mitigate or relieve the most urgent symptoms may be used. Dr. Home says that half a grain of the corrosive sublimate of mercury, dissolved in a proper quantity of brandy, and taken night and morning, will often be of service in cancers of the face and nose. He likewise recommends an infusion of the *solanum*, or nightshade, in cancers of the breasts.

But the medicine most in repute at present for this disease is hemlock. Dr. Stork, physician at Vienna, has of late recommended the extract of this plant as very efficacious in cancers of every kind. The doctor says he has given some hundred weights of it without ever hurting any body, and often with manifest advantage. He advises the patient, however, to begin with very small doses, as two or three grains, and to increase the dose gradually till some good effect be perceived, and there to rest without further increase. From two or three grains at first, the doctor says he has increased

the dose to two, three, or four drams a day, and finds that such doses may be continued for several weeks without any bad consequences.

The regimen which the doctor recommends during the use of the medicine is to avoid farinaceous substances not fermented, and too acrid aromatics. He says good wine will not be hurtful to those who are accustomed to it, nor a moderate use of acids; and adds, that the patient should live in a pure free air, and keep his mind as quiet and cheerful as possible.

The doctor does not pretend to fix the time in which a cancer may be resolved by the use of hemlock, but says he has given it for above two years in large doses without any apparent benefit; nevertheless, the patient has been cured by persisting in the use of it for half a year longer. This is at least encouragement to give it a fair trial. Though we are far from thinking the hemlock merits those extravagant encomiums which the doctor has bestowed upon it, yet, in a disease which has so long baffled the boasted powers of medicine, we think it ought always to be tried.

The powder of hemlock is by some preferred to the extract. They are both made of the fresh leaves, and may be used nearly in the same manner. Dr. Nicholson, of Berwick, says he gradually increased the dose of the powder from a few grains to half a dram, and gave near four drams of it in the day, with remarkably good effects. The hemlock may also be used externally either as a poultice or fermentation. The sore may likewise be kept clean by injecting daily a strong decoction of the tops and leaves into it.

Few things contribute more to the healing of foul sordid ulcers of any kind than keeping them thoroughly clean. This ought never to be neglected. The best application for this purpose seems to be the carrot poultice. The root of the common carrot may be grated, and moistened with as much water as will bring it to the consistence of a poultice or cataplasm. This must be applied to the sore, and renewed twice a day. It generally cleans the sore, eases the pain, and takes away the disagreeable smell, which are objects of no small importance in such a dreadful disorder.*

Wort, or an infusion of malt, has been recommended not only as a proper drink, but as a powerful medicine, in this

* London Medical Essays.

disease. It must be frequently made fresh, and the patient may take it at pleasure. Two, three, or even four English pints of it may be drank every day for a considerable time. No benefit can be expected from any medicine in this disease unless it be persisted in for a long time. It is of too obstinate a nature to be soon removed; and, when it admits of a cure at all, it must be brought about by inducing an almost total change of the habit, which must always be a work of time. Setons or issues in the neighborhood of the cancer have sometimes good effects.

When all other medicines fail, recourse must be had to opium, as a kind of solace. This will not indeed cure the disease, but it will ease the patient's agony, and render life more tolerable while it continues.

To avoid this dreadful disorder, people ought to use wholesome food, to take sufficient exercise in the open air, to be as easy and cheerful as possible, and carefully to guard against all blows, bruises, and every kind of pressure upon the breasts or other glandular parts.*

CHAPTER XLVII.

OF THE VENEREAL DISEASE.

In a former edition of this book, the venereal disease was omitted. The reasons however which at that time induced me to leave it out have, upon more mature consideration, vanished. Bad consequences, no doubt, may arise from ignorant persons tampering with medicine in this disorder; but the danger from that quarter seems to be more than balanced by the great and solid advantages which must arise to the patient from an early knowledge of his case, and an attention

* As hemlock is the principal medicine recommended in this disease, we would have given some directions for the gathering and preparing of that plant; but as its different preparations are now kept in the shops, we think it much safer for people to get them there, with proper directions for using them.