

Uncleanliness is also highly injurious to the organs of sensation. Perhaps the benignity of Nature is not displayed in any thing more strongly than in the warnings she gives of this evil, and in her own endeavours to avert it. She has left us so little to do, that we deserve no pity for the severest punishment of our neglect. See how kindly she has guarded the extremities of the nerves all over the body, the interior parts of the nose, the mouth, the ear, the eye, against external annoyance! Observe with what efforts, entirely independent of our will, she strives to relieve those delicate organs from all impurities! The uneasiness we feel upon such occasions ought to rouse our immediate attention. Shall we suffer dirt to gather upon the skin, to dull the sense of feeling, to obstruct the pores, and to drive back into the system the noxious particles which Nature endeavours to throw off, when the use of a little soap and water would prevent every inconvenience? Is it too much trouble to wash the ears; to dip the face with the eyes open in a basin of clean water four or five times every morning, to rinse the nose and mouth; and to keep the tongue clean, not by scraping it, but by attending to the state of the stomach, of which the tongue is an index? Some people seem to be as much afraid of water as if they had been bitten by a mad dog; and if they remain obstinate in that antipathy, I can only say, they deserve a far worse end than that of such unfortunate incurables, to be suffocated in their own filth.

CHAP. XXXIII.

OF A SCIRRHUS AND CANCER.

A SCIRRHUS is a hard indolent tumour, usually seated in some of the glands; as the breast, the arm-pits, &c. If the tumour becomes large, unequal, of a livid, blackish, or leaden colour, 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. It is most commonly confined to glands, and particularly the testes and mammæ, but is now and then, nevertheless, to be met with in the uterus, as likewise in the face and other parts that are thinly covered with flesh, and which at the same time are a good deal exposed to external irritation, such as the lower lip, the angles of the eyes, the organs of vision, the wings of the nose, tongue, and penis. A cancer is an ulcer of the very worst kind, with an uneven surface, and ragged and painful edges, which spreads in a very rapid manner, discharges a thin acrimonious matter, that excoriates the neighbouring integuments, and has a very fetid smell, and which is usually preceded by a hard or scirrhus swelling of the part, if glandular.

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 fear, grief, 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 or 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, external injuries, 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 tumour, about the size of a hazle-nut, 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 tumour irritated by pressure or improper treatment of any kind, it begins to extend itself towards the neighbouring parts, by pushing out a kind of roots or limbs. It then gets the name of *cancer*, from its fancied resemblance between these limbs and the claws of a crab.

The colour 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 tumour is very hard, rough, and unequal, with a protuberance, or rising, in the middle: its size increases daily, and the neighbouring veins become thick, knotty, and of a blackish colour.

The skin at length gives way, and a thin sharp ichor begins to flow, which corrodes the neighbouring parts till it forms a large unsightly ulcer. More occult cancers arise, and communicate with the neighbouring glands. The pain and stench become intolerable; the appetite fails; the strength is exhausted by a continual hectic fever; at last, a violent hæmorrhage, 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, and high-seasoned or 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 prevented; but after the disorder has arrived at a certain height, it generally sets all medicine at defiance.

When a scirrhus tumour 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. Some blood may also be let, 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. The food must be light, and an English pint of the decoction of woods or sarsaparilla may be drank daily. I have sometimes discussed hard tumours, which had the appearance of beginning cancers, by a course of this kind.

To allay pain and irritation, and, probably, thereby retard the progress of the disease, opium may be given internally, and likewise applied externally, mixed with the different preparations of lead used as sedatives and discutients;* and much may be done in all incipient scirrhus tumours by repeatedly blistering the part, having first had recourse to the frequent applications of leeches, occasional purgatives, and a cooling diet.

Should the tumour, however, not yield to this treatment, but, on the contrary, become larger and harder, it will be proper to extirpate it either by the knife or caustic. 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 humours corrupted by it. This, however, is the common way, which makes the operation so seldom succeed. Scirrhus tumours are often removed with perfect safety, and thereby prevented from degenerating into true cancer, when extirpation is not delayed too long; but after a tumour of this description has ulcerated, thereby assuming the cancerous character, and has afforded an opportunity for an absorption of the matter into the system, there is every reason to suppose that a complete cure seldom, if ever, be effected. Few people will submit to the extirpation till death stares them in the face, whereas, if it were done early the patient's life would not be endangered 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.

* Take Cerate of Superacetate of Lead,
1 ounce.
Opium, in Powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ drachm.
Mix them for an ointment.
or
Take a Plaster of the Oxyd of Lead, and
apply it to the tumour.

or
Take Solution of Acetate of Ammonia,
1 ounce.
Solution of Acetate of Lead,
30 drops.
Pure Water,
1 ounce.
Tincture of Opium,
 $\frac{1}{2}$ drachm.
Make a lotion.

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 drachms 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 encomia 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, at least, during the occult or scirrhus state. Deadly nightshade and henbane are medicines of the same class with hemlock, and the timely use of them has sometimes proved advantageous in glandular tumours and indurations that are likely to become cancerous. These have also been employed, with others of the narcotic class, in external applications, as well as the hemlock. When used in this way the leaves may be boiled in milk, so as to form a decoction sufficiently strong, with which the part is to be frequently fomented.

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 drachm, and gave near four drachms of it in a day with remarkably good effects. The hemlock may also be used externally either as a poultice or fomentation. The sore may likewise be kept clean by injecting daily a strong decoction of the tops of 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 clears the sore, eases the pain, and takes away the disagreeable smell, which are objects of no small importance in such a dreadful disorder.* In every species of open cancer, the air should be excluded as much as possible; a double covering of oil-silk may therefore be applied over the dressings.

* London Medical Essays.

Wort, or an infusion of malt, has been recommended, not only as a proper drink, but as a powerful medicine in this 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 neighbourhood of the cancer have sometimes good effects.* A cancerous ulcer of the tongue has been cured by nitric acid† and opium, which had resisted various remedies. An opiate was given at night; and the acid, to prevent it from corroding the teeth, was directed to be sucked through a tube. In fourteen days after the exhibition of this medicine, healthy granulations were seen to shoot out from the bottom of the ulcer, which gradually healed from this time; and in the course of three months, although half the tongue had been in a state of ulceration, was perfectly healed. Nothing was applied to the diseased part but a lotion composed of the extract of hemlock, rectified spirit and water, to which little or no efficacy was ascribed.

Applications of a caustic nature have been much used in the ulcerated stage of cancer, and they have been employed under a variety of forms; but their principal ingredients have been well known to be either arsenic or corrosive sublimate. The most noted are the Arundel powder, Guy's powder, and Plunket's powder: which last is a composition of crow's-foot, dog's-fennel, and arsenic. None of these have ever produced the smallest benefit; on the contrary, they all occasion infinitely more pain than the more certain method of cure, when taken in due time, by the operation of cutting out the cancerous core; but, unfortunately, by such empirical, mercenary, and fallacious means as the above, the unhappy patient has been but too frequently beguiled beyond the period when the operation might have been attended with success.

As a topical application in external cancer, such as of the lip, breast, &c., lint dipped in a solution of the subborate of soda,‡ and applied to the ulcerated surface, removing it as often as it becomes dry, has been frequently attended with a good effect.

* In a cancer which had set all medicines, and even surgery, at defiance, I lately saw remarkable effects from an obstinate perseverance in a course of antiseptics. I ordered the deep ulcers to be washed to the bottom by means of a syringe, twice or thrice a-day, either with an infusion of the bark, or a decoction of carrot, and that the patient should take, four or five times a-day, a glass of good wine, with half a drachm of the best powdered bark in it. The sores, after being washed, were likewise sprinkled with the same powder. When the patient began this course, her death was daily expected. She continued it for about two years, with manifest advantage; but being told by an eminent surgeon, that the bark would not cure a cancer, and that the sores ought not to be washed, she discontinued the practice, and died in a few weeks. This course was not expected to cure the cancer, but to prolong the patient's life, which it evidently did almost to a miracle.

† Take Diluted Nitric Acid, 1 ounce.
Honey, 2 ounces.
Pure Water, 2 pints.
Mix. Three table-spoonsful are to be taken frequently throughout the day.

‡ Take Solution of Subborate of Soda, 3 drachms.
Extract of Henbane, 2 drachms.
Distilled Water made warm, 8 oz.
Make a lotion, to be applied to the part affected.

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.*

In the long catalogue of human affections, there is scarcely one to be more dreaded than the cancer. It is no less painful than loathsome; it kills by inches; is seldom cured except by the knife; and even that does not always succeed. I have frequently seen small tumours in the breast, which might perhaps have ended in cancers, yield to the camphorated mercurial ointment, applied twice a-day; but after the scirrhus had broke and become a cancer, I do not remember having ever seen it cured; nor do I believe that the whole *materia medica* can afford a remedy for it.

Yet there are plenty of people in London who cure cancers; and no one, who has a sufficient share of faith, can be at a loss for a cancer-doctor. One may see even the fronts of houses inscribed with the words, "Cancers cured here," in large characters. I lately had a patient, who once fancied that her breast was a little cancerous, and, under that impression, was kept for two years in the hands of a female cancer-curer, though the lady in reality had not the least symptom of a cancer about her.†

But credulity is a disease of the mind still more incurable than cancers. I had occasion, a few years ago, to make several visits at the house of one of the richest merchants in London, whose sister was afflicted at the time with a cancer; and though she lived in the same house, I was never desired to look at her. Blind credulity prevailed over reason. Her cure was entrusted to an American quack, who knew just as much as my lady's lap-dog, of the nature and proper treatment of cancers. He only helped to kill her, which the disease might ultimately have done: yet surely she ought to have had better advice.

* 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.

† In a work lately published on cancer by a Mr. Carmichael, a number of cases are adduced in favour of the utility of iron as a remedy in this disease. The preparation of this metal, to which he gives the preference, is the carbonate, that is, the precipitate formed by saturating a solution of the salt of steel (*ferrum vitriolatum*) with the fixed alkali. Its properties are nearly the same as those of the rust of iron, when properly prepared. Of this the patient may take to the extent of a drachm per day, formed into pills, with the addition of any aromatic, to make it sit more easily on the stomach. The same preparation, finely levigated, may also be advantageously sprinkled on the surface of the sore; or a wash, made by diluting the muriated tincture of steel with water, may be used. This answers well also as an injection, when the uterus is the seat of the complaint. On the authority of this gentleman, whose practice appears to be founded on experience, and is detailed with candour, in so deplorable a disease, the remedy proposed by him certainly merits a trial. A. P. B.