

CASE OF INFLAMMATION AND ULCERATION OF THE THROAT AND TONGUE,

SUCCESSFULLY TREATED BY NITRATE OF COPPER; AND IN
WHICH THERE EXISTED ABNORMAL AFFECTION
OF THE HEART.

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Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland; and Physician to the
Ballymoney Dispensary.

CASE. M. A., aged 20, though apparently not more than fifteen years of age, of a fair complexion and delicate figure, consulted me on the 16th December 1850, about her throat, which had been affected since the spring of 1845. About this period, she suffered from a severe attack of sore throat, which was partially got under; but a trace of it still continued through the following summer, and till the succeeding spring, when she had a repetition of an affection somewhat similar in character, but more formidable in its results. Ulceration engaged both the tonsils and palate, and led to suppuration, the matter being discharged internally. Under these circumstances, the parents of the patient first sought medical aid. In spite of all treatment, the ulceration gradually extended, the hard palate becoming engaged. The patient was sent to the sea-side, where she remained about a month. Repeated periodic attacks of cynanche tonsillaris ensued, until the year 1848, when she abandoned all medical advice. Her voice at this date was much affected, and several spiculæ of bone came away through the anterior nares. About the spring of 1850, the patient first began to cough. The expectoration was of a frothy and slightly purulent character, particularly on awaking in the morning. At the same time, she suffered from a most profuse salivation, which became more copious towards evening, and was accompanied with a severe pain shooting to the right ear. A month previous to her consulting me, she felt occasional palpitation, which, she stated, gave her little concern. The patient had never menstruated, nor was her mother aware of any constitutional effort to bring about that change having taken place at any period. Both her parents are remarkably healthy; her father having served in the capacity of parish-clerk for many years, and never having had any delicacy of the throat or chest. This disease had no connexion whatever with any syphilitic taint. Such is the previous history of the case, which I collected in the most careful manner, when I was first consulted.

The phenomena manifest on a careful examination were as follows. The uvula and soft palate had been wholly removed. The opening of the pharynx was easily seen, the mucous membrane presenting an abraded and ulcerated appearance. The hard palate was attacked by the ulcerative process, as well as the septum narium, and a thick tenacious slough was closely adherent to each. The epiglottis was partially destroyed; and the larynx was deeply implicated, as I inferred from the complete loss of voice. The aspect of this extensive ulceration was uneven and granular. The tongue was irregularly fissured, hard, and warty to the touch, and triangular portions of it were insulated by

clefts, some of which were clean and of a bright red colour, and others covered with a glutinous dirty-white substance. A trace of each tonsil still remained; and, from the pain affecting the right ear, it is natural to suppose that the ulcerative process had extended along the Eustachian tube. The patient suffered from slight dysphagia; and, after the slightest exertion, from a severe hoarse cough, accompanied with frothy expectoration.

On proceeding to examine the chest, an abnormal condition of the heart, of more than ordinary interest, presented itself: viz., a peculiar "who", audible at the distance of four yards from the patient. There was no marked dulness on percussion over any part of the thorax; and, on applying the stethoscope, an extensive mucous râle could, although with difficulty, be detected, being, in a great measure, obscured by this abnormal "who", which prevailed over the entire chest, anteriorly and posteriorly, but especially at the junction of the third rib with the sternum, and along the course of the aorta, both sounds of the heart having completely merged into the one "who". The patient had lateral curvature of the dorsal vertebræ, the convexity being towards the left side. The pulse was 100, weak, and easily compressible. Struck with the peculiarity of these symptoms, I lost no time in seeking the assistance of Dr. Latham, a gentleman eminently qualified to form a correct diagnosis, and at that time physician to the Ballymoney Dispensary. After a most careful examination, we came to the conclusion, that this unnatural sound was caused by scrofulous excrescences on the valves of the heart, more particularly on those of the aorta, and the following treatment was forthwith adopted.

℞ Pil. ferri iodidi x; one to be taken twice daily. ℞ Pil. aloes cum myrrhâ x; two to be taken every third night. The tongue and throat were ordered to be touched with caustic iodide, the formula of which I subjoin. ℞ Iodinii, et iodidi potassii, singulorum ʒiv; aquæ destillatæ, ʒj. M. Fiat solutio.

December 23. The patient presented herself this morning; and, to our no small amazement, the "whoing sound" had wholly disappeared, both sounds of the heart being distinctly audible and normal. The pulse was 98, regular, but weak. There was no marked improvement in the throat or tongue; the latter still appeared fissured, hard, and knobby. A copious leucorrhœa had supervened.

December 30. The throat was cleaner, and presented a more healthy character; the ulcerative process was somewhat checked. The tongue was still covered with small white patchy ulcerations. The patient could swallow with much less difficulty. The heart's action was natural. The leucorrhœa still continued. She was ordered to continue the aforementioned treatment, and to use the *gargarisma aluminis*, in addition to the local application of the caustic iodide.

Matters continued gradually improving under this treatment, till early in March; at which date, being obliged to leave this locality, I lost sight of the case till the end of the following May. On the 2nd of last June, the patient again presented herself at the dispensary; and, on a careful examination of the throat and tongue, I found manifest symptoms of retrogression. She stated that latterly she had been very remiss in her attendance at the dispensary, and consequently felt much worse. The sloughy discharge again adhered to the hard

palate; the tongue was ulcerated in parts; and the patient complained of general debility. The heart's action was feeble, both sounds were distinct; and the cough was harsh and very troublesome. Sensible of the good effects of the previous treatment, whilst properly attended to, I determined again to have recourse to somewhat similar remedies, and accordingly prescribed *mistura ferri composita* with tincture of iodine, and a gargle of dilute hydrochloric acid and tincture of catechu to be used at the same time. As so many caustic applications had been applied, and, to a certain extent ineffectually, I touched the throat and tongue with *nitrate of copper*; a caustic, as yet, comparatively little used, but to the incalculable benefit derived from the application of which, not only in this but also in many similar cases, I can bear the fullest testimony. After this treatment had been persevered in for about a fortnight, the throat had become quite clean, the sloughy discharge had almost disappeared, the tongue was also clean and free from ulceration, and the general health was much improved. Being now satisfied of the good effects arising from the first application of the nitrate of copper, I determined to repeat it, continuing the gargle as before; and I prescribed at the same time a dessert-spoonful of cod-liver oil to be taken three times a-day.

Early in July, as appears from my note-book, the general health was much improved, the throat perfectly clean and free from any trace of ulceration; the tongue was also clean, its colour natural, the fissures obliterated, and although somewhat atrophied and shrivelled, in every other respect it was perfectly healthy. The patient was directed to continue the *oleum jecoris aselli*, and the *gargarisma acidi hydrochlorici diluti*. She was ordered to go to the sea side; and in the month of September, after her return, I find the following report: "Patient much improved in every respect, the throat and tongue healthy."

The catamenia have never been regularly established, but I confidently expect that a perseverance in suitable tonic treatment may bring about such a desirable end. As far as the voice is concerned, I believe it to be irremediably lost, in consequence of the ulcerative process having completely destroyed the vocal apparatus in an early stage of the disease.

REMARKS. I have been induced to bring the above case under the notice of the profession, as it tends to exemplify, in a striking manner, the fearful effects of neglected ulceration of the throat and fauces, the severity and rapidity of the course of which is thus admirably described by Professor Porter, in his work on laryngeal disease: "Occasionally the ulceration is deep and foul, and spreads with an almost phagedenic destructiveness; the sporadic sores commencing usually above, either in the soft palate or the back of the pharynx, and spreading downwards." And again: "In some cases it is so extensive, that the whole configuration of the organ is spoiled and lost, the epiglottis being partially or entirely removed, and the chordæ vocales and ventricles carried away. The surface of this extensive ulceration is irregular, warty, and gives the appearance of uneven granulations."

The results also demonstrate the value of nitrate of copper as a caustic; a remedy which I have also found effectual in similar cases, where, in spite of the ordinary topical treatment, the disease had re-

mained unchecked. Its caustic properties may be objected to as being too powerful, and its application may be alleged to be fraught with danger; but in every case in which I have used it, no bad effects have ensued, nor is there reason to apprehend any if the following precautions be attended to; viz., to dry the ulcer or part to be cauterised before applying the nitrate, and afterwards to smear it with oil. For further information relative to the successful application of this escharotic, the reader may consult an excellent treatise on *Diseases of the Tongue*, by Dr. Fleming, in No. xix of the *Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science*, p. 87.

Lastly, the case is of some value, as illustrating the occasional difficulty of forming a correct diagnosis between organic and functional disease of the heart. The "bruit", in this instance, as the event proved, depended on a chlorotic condition of the blood, which had been induced by the long continued ulceration of the throat, and that, too, existing in an apparently scrofulous habit of body. A conception of this peculiar sound may be better conveyed by the word "whoo", than by any other I am aware of; and though it was somewhat analogous to the "coo" described by Dr. Hope, yet it was essentially different, and could not be confounded with it. It was the most unequivocal and peculiar case of functional simulating organic disease of the heart that I ever had an opportunity of witnessing.

Ballymoney, Ireland, November 10, 1851.

CASE OF FALSE DIFFUSED ANEURISM OF THE ABDOMINAL AORTA, CAUSED BY CARIES OF THE VERTEBRÆ.

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CASE. Edward Russell, a dyer by trade, 35 years of age, came under my care as an out-door patient of the Coventry Hospital on the 21st July 1851.

He was formerly a strong muscular man; but, of late years, having suffered much mental disquietude, he had become very intemperate. He had always been accustomed to hard labour; and in the prosecution of his trade had had occasion to be frequently lifting heavy weights, and had been much exposed to sudden and great alternations of temperature, at times standing up to his knees in cold water, at others working with his back exposed to a large fire, not more than a yard distant. A few months ago, he was knocked down by some drunken men, but was not materially injured; nor did he recollect ever having received any hurt in the back. For the last twelve months, he had been losing flesh; and during the latter five or six, had suffered much from pain in the loins, of a sharp, darting character, coming on at intervals, especially after unusual exertion, and causing him to suspend his work for twenty or thirty minutes at a time. This pain had, for the last week or two, increased so much, as to confine him to bed.