CASE
OF AN
EXTENSIVE WOUND
FROM THE
BITE OF A SHARK.

By DR. KENNEDY.

COMMUNICATED

By SIR JAMES MACGRIGOR.

Read March 31, 1817.

Manaar, 22d February, 1817.

THIS day, about 4 P.M. while sitting in my veranda along with Lieut. Tydd, the officer in command of this station, a man was brought to me in a palanquin, accompanied by the agent for the Renter of the Chank Fishery and a number of his people. We were given to understand that the man had been bit by a shark, and from the lamentations and supplicating signs of those about him, we were led to conclude that he must have suffered severely.

He was lying on his back in the palanquin,

seemingly in great agony, having a cloth wrapped round his body where he was bit, which, to save him the pain of being moved, I had cut across, which brought into view the front part of the wound. The abdominal muscles of the left side were cut asunder and turned back, exposing the colon in its passage across the belly, and several other convolutions of the small intestines.

Seeing this state of things, I did not think proper to delay by any farther examination here, and had him conveyed immediately to the hospital. Having given directions for the necessary dressings to be prepared, and having had him removed from the palanquin to a cot, (which was accomplished with considerable difficulty,) I was more at liberty to examine into the state and extent of the wound.

It appeared that the upper jaw of the animal had been fixed on the left side of his belly, forming a wound of nearly a semicircular shape, of which about one inch on the left side of the umbilicus was the *upper*, the lower part of the upper third of the thigh the *lower* extremity, and an inch behind the trochanter the centre. The abdominal and lumbar muscles were divided and turned up, exposing the bowels as before stated, and laying bare three of the lowest ribs; the gluteal muscles were lacerated and torn up; the tendons about the trochanter divided, laying bare that tuberosity; and the vastus externus and part of the rectus

muscles of the thigh were cut across. The lower jaw of the fish had been fixed in the muscles of the right side of the abdomen, forming a segment of a circle between the umbilicus and an inch above the pubis ; the teeth of this jaw, however, had only individually penetrated the muscles, without producing any division or laceration of the parts. The wound of the left side measured in length nineteen inches ; in breadth, where the abdominal and lumbar muscles were lacerated, between four and five inches ; below this and above the trochanter two ; and at and below the trochanter three and four inches.

The accident had occurred about one o'clock, at the mouth of the river, (a distance of five or six miles from the port,) while he was employed at his business as a chank-diver. It would appear from his account, that the shark caught hold of him as he was hawling up to the boat with his load of chanks, and was only prevented from carrying him off by his body being fastened to a rope with which he was pulled up. The resistance made by the trochanter to which the teeth of the upper jaw had pierced but could not penetrate, certainly prevented that part of the body in his grasp from being taken away.

Conceiving that some portion of salt water might have entered the cavity of the abdomen while he was dragging up, I had him turned as gently as

possible on that side where the opening was, and with a soft sponge removed any moisture that was present. This, however, was not great in quantity, and the little there was being bloody, I could not distinguish it from any other exudation. Having then cleaned the wound from clotted blood, and having removed the hair from the sides, I closed it as well as I could by throwing straps of adhesive plaister around the body, and crossing them over the edges on each side; after which a light dressing was applied, and a many-tailed bandage thrown over the whole.

What from the loss of blood, removing from the boat into the palanquin, from the palanquin to the cot, and dressing, the poor fellow was much exhausted, and complained of being sick and faintish. A glass of wine was given him, with a few drops of laudanum and ether, which revived him a little.

In the evening about nine o'clock I visited him and found him considerably feverish, and from his having had no stool for the two last days, I was induced to give him a glyster, which produced one motion immediately, and another during the night.

On visiting him in the morning I found him still feverish, having had no sleep all night, and complaining greatly of the pain about that part of his

belly which was torn ; his pulse was quick, and he was hot and thirsty. I took some blood from his arm, and ordered him to have congee with cream of tartar for drink.

Evening of the 23rd. Has been hot and feverish all day ; is now very low, restless and uneasy, and still complains of the pain about his belly ; has had no stool to-day. If he has no stool during the night, to have ℥vi of Epsom salts early in the morning.

24th. Took the salts early, from which he has had no stool ; no rest during the night, but seems more composed, although in addition to the pain in his belly he now complains of pain in the whole course of the wound, particularly about the trochanter. To continue his congee and acid for drink, and to have a little sago with wine.

Evening. Removed the outer dressings, and changed the straps about the abdomen and loins which had slipped ; feels easier since. If he has no stools during the night, to have ℥ss of castor oil early in the morning.

25th. Has had no stool, although he has taken the castor oil ; slept none during the night, and seems very much dejected ; has had the Padre with him, and seems to despair of getting well. The people who visit him, by their lamentations and

howlings, seem to encourage him in this idea. I have therefore debarred all except his own brothers and the agent from coming to see him. Repeat the castor oil immediately.

Evening. Removed all the dressings; the wound looks well, and has united in several places; about the abdomen and in the neighbourhood of the trochanter and downwards, however, no union has taken place, and the discharge is thin and brown; cleaned and dressed as before.

26th. Has slept a little for the first time during the night; ordered his body to be sponged with soap and water, and his clothes changed, after which he felt comparatively comfortable; still complains, however, of pain about his belly, but does not refer it more to the internal than to the external part of the wound. To have $\mathfrak{z}$ ss of Epsom salts, and to use the rice water without the acid.

Evening. Had a stool from the salts, but fears he will not get any sleep during the night. To have an opium pill at bed-time.

27th. Slept some in the forepart of the night, but dreaming that the shark had a hold of him, he awoke in a fright, and did not go to rest again. To have his congee with acid, and his wine and sago continued.

Evening. Renewed the dressings; the wound improves, and the discharge is good at every point except at the trochanter, (through the periosteum and perhaps a little way into the body of which the teeth of the shark seem to have penetrated,) and at the opening into the abdomen; and from the encouraging hopes I have now given him, he seems much elated, and expresses a greater anxiety to live than he has done before. To have his body sponged with warm vinegar and water, and his clothes changed at bed-time.

28th. Has passed a comfortable night, and looks comparatively cheerful this morning, and for the first time since the occurrence of the accident desires to have something to eat. To have chicken soup made for dinner, and his sago and drink continued.

Evening. The chicken broth not sitting on his stomach, he had a little mild curry made which he took with some rice for dinner; had a stool in the afternoon, and appears now composed and easy; he has still a slight accession of fever in the evenings, but the pain about the abdomen is much abated. To have his feet sponged with warm water at bed-time.

March 1st. Changed the dressings this morning; the wound still improves, and a partial union

has taken place between the abdominal and lumbar muscles : strapped with inch-straps of adhesive plaister over the edges of the wound only, instead of round the body, which method was afterwards continued. From this period there was little variation of the symptoms and treatment ; the principal objects I had to attend to being the encouragement of slow, and the reduction of exuberant granulation over the whole, and endeavouring to close the opening and correct the discharge of the abdominal wound. To effect this last, it was necessary to administer small doses of bark internally, and this wound was gradually closed by strapping over a double compress, and stimulants applied to the edges of the opening. His health, which at first had sunk much, improved rapidly, so that on the 13th of March, (on which day I left Manaar, being under orders to take charge of the district of Chilaw,) I saw him moved for the first time from his cot, and with the assistance of his brothers, walk about a couple of yards and sit down on a chair, in which position he seemed much pleased to shew himself to me ; and having told him that I considered him now out of danger, and that I was going off, he put his hands on the arms of the chair, and raising his body in the best way he could, with tears of gratitude in his eyes, made his salem in a manner which I shall never forget.

The opening into the abdomen had perfectly

closed about three days before, and the body of the wound had united, although the surface had not yet skinned over, and which of course only attention and time could accomplish.

I left him in charge of Mr. Mathias, the sub-assistant of the Garrison, (who attended him along with me from the commencement,) with instructions what to do, and directions to forward to me a statement of his progress and improvement. Soon after my departure from Manaar, however, Mr. Mathias fell ill of fever, and was obliged to remove to Jaffnapatam, where he has remained unwell since. I have therefore been prevented from obtaining any farther account of this man, except what I have from my friend Mr. Tydd, who, in a letter I received from him about a month ago, informed me he was doing well; and having this day* received a letter from him in which he does not mention any awkward occurrence having taken place with respect to my patient, (although he knows I am interested in him,) I am led to conclude that he is now well, and likely long to bear about with him on the shores of India a striking example of the benefit of British surgery.

JOHN KENNEDY,

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* 18th May 1817.