ON THE USE OF THE MINERAL ACIDS IN THE TREATMENT OF INFLAMMATORY DISEASE OF THE CERVIX UTERI.

By J. HENRY BENNET, M.D.

THE recent discussion in the JOURNAL on the value of nitric acid in the treatment of chronic inflammatory disease of the cervix uteri shows how constantly we are going over again and again the same ground in medicine and surgery, for want of knowing what has been done by those who have preceded us. The entire subject is discussed in all its bearings in my work on *Uterine Inflammation*, the first edition of which was published in 1845, the second in 1848, the fourth and last in 1861 (page 291). The following extract from page 299 will illustrate this fact.

"The mineral acids which may be employed when a more energetic caustic than the nitrate of silver is required are the acid nitrate of mercury, nitric acid, hydrochloric acid, and sulphuric acid. I have given each of these preparations in succession lengthened trials, employing them separately and successively in all cases in which this form of caustic appeared indicated, and see no reason for modifying the opinion which I have long entertained; viz., that the acid nitrate of mercury is more efficacious than the other acids. It appears to bring the ulceration more rapidly into a healthy healing state. After that, I prefer pure nitric acid, although the extent to which it fumes on being applied is a slight disadvantage. Any of these acids, however, may be employed in the absence of others."

The above extract embodies the surgical history of the mineral acids in the treatment of chronic ulceration in every part of the body: anus, rectum, uterus, vagina, vulva, nares, fauces; indeed, in any region (skin or mucous membrane) in which chronic inflammatory ulceration can be brought to light. Any of the acids will do; but I prefer the acid nitrate of mercury and nitric acid to the others; and of the latter two I prefer, along with the French surgeons generally, the acid nitrate of mercury to pure nitric acid. I think the former has some of the special detergent properties which we recognise in the various mercurial ointments so much resorted to in the treatment of chronic inflammation of the skin. At the same time, I admit that nitric acid will do nearly as well, and I have always used it when I have not had the other at hand. The fear of salivation is altogether visionary. I have never seen any but the slightest evidence of such condition, such as is sometimes, but very rarely, produced by a few grains of blue pill or grey powder.

At the same time, as Dr. Tilt very justly remarks, the mineral acids cannot be presented as substitutes for nitrate of silver or stronger agents, potassa fusa or the actual cautery. Each has its indication its period of use, and one cannot be considered the substitute of the other. The object is to modify vitality, to substitute healthy reparative inflammation for unhealthy destructive inflammation. The course of treatment I have recommended in my work since 1845 is—1. Emollients and antiphlogistics; 2. Astringents and slight vitality modifying agents, such as the nitrate of silver in solution or in substance; 3. Stronger vitality modifying agents, such as the mineral acids; 4. Agents of this character that act on the deeper tissues and profoundly modify vitality. An experienced practitioner will begin at the lower part of the ladder, and ascend, if necessary, success often crowning his efforts before he reaches the more active agents. We are not warranted in using a paving-stone to kill a fly, as in *Æsop's Fables*.

In conclusion, I would again remark that the above rules may be said to be the principles that guide us in the treatment of all chronic inflammations of the skin, mucous membrane, and subjacent tissues, when accessible to surgical treatment.

Mentone, France, December 30th, 1875.

THREE CASES OF LIGHTNING-STROKE.

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THE scanty information which we obtain from works on this subject induces me to offer the following observations on three cases which came under my care during the past summer. Two very severe thunderstorms visited this locality on June 17th, and again on July 2nd, striking down people on both instances, and also killing several of the lower animals.

On June 17th, a severe thunderstorm, accompanied with vivid lightning and very heavy rain, overtook a number of farm-labourers work-

ing in an open turnip-field at some considerable distance from a fir-plantation. All the parties were hoeing side by side, and all were about two hundred yards from the plantation. The party consisted of three persons, a man, a young woman, and a boy. When the first peal of thunder was heard, immediately after a flash of lightning, the man felt his hat thrust firmly on his head, as if some one had pressed it down with their hands. He also was called for by the boy to come and look to the young woman who was lying on the ground, speechless, moaning, and cold. The boy also seemed confused and unsteady in his gait, and complained of great pain in the right leg, with coldness of the body generally.

I, being close at hand, was called in to see them, and found the young woman just recovering from the faint in which she had been. Her skin felt very hot; her face was very red and scorched; the eyebrow of one side was singed off; there was also a scorch across the chest, and one arm was very red and sore, as if it had been scalded; and one leg, especially about the calf, was discoloured and painful, as if the blood were congested in the part. The pulse was quick and firm; the eyesight was dim, and she said she had never heard any thunder or seen any lightning, although she thought her sight was affected, because she constantly saw flashes of light before her eyes since she fell down in the field. She complained of severe headache, with a rumbling feeling in the bowels, and felt very nervous and shaky, as if she had just recovered from some accident. She also perceived a peculiar sulphurous smell about her clothes and person, which was confirmed by those about her. She felt very weak, and scarcely able to move her legs; but there was no distinct paralysis of any part.

The case of the boy was evidently of a slighter nature, but, from a scientific point of view, more interesting than that of the girl. He seemed very much frightened and very cold, tremulous and sore, especially in the neighbourhood of the knee, elbow, and wrist-joints. There was no broken skin anywhere, as in the former instance, but there was a scorch on one leg, which bore an exact resemblance to part of a Scotch fir; thus giving an example of the so-called electric photographs of some writers. The impression was very decided, and remained distinct for nearly two days; but after that it gradually faded.

Both cases were treated with stimulants at the time of the accident, with cold soothing applications to the head and other painful parts. The boy required no after-treatment further than rest for a few days from his work. The girl remained in a nervous excitable condition at night for a few days, requiring sedatives to induce sleep, but gradually recovered within a fortnight to her usual state of health.

To the south-west of the place where this accident occurred, six sheep were killed by the lightning; and, having an opportunity of examining their carcasses afterwards, I found no marks of the electricity, either externally or internally, upon them. All of them probably died of shock from the return-stroke.

With regard to the people who were struck, their bodies bore evidence of the passage of the electricity; although their clothes were uninjured, and metallic articles on their persons, such as money and earrings, were left without apparent marks or alteration in their magnetic condition.

The third case occurred on July 2nd of the present year. During a severe thunderstorm, a post-runner was struck by the return shock, and complained much of headache and confusion of intellect. He was unmarked by the lightning, and gradually recovered himself under rest and tonics. At the same time, two lambs which were grazing within a few yards of the post-runner were struck down and killed, and they bore no trace of external injury.

CASE OF DEATH FROM INTRACRANIAL ANEURISM OF THE LEFT INTERNAL CAROTID ARTERY IN A BOY THIRTEEN YEARS OLD.

By JOHN BROADBENT, M.R.C.S. and L.S.A., Manchester.

ON May 1st, 1875, about 3 P.M., John F., a piecer, aged 13 years, came home from work complaining of feeling ill, and having pains in his head. Shortly afterwards, he vomited twice, and had a fainting fit. After this, he went to bed, still complaining of headache. He slept during the night, and, the following morning, said he felt better, and he took his breakfast as usual. About eleven o'clock, he was preparing to get up, when he was seized with convulsions, his hands being bent inwards, and the mouth drawn to one side, but his mother could not say whether to the right or the left. I saw him about an hour afterwards. He was quite comatose; the pupils of both eyes were