FORCED REDUCTION OF LATERAL CURVATURE OF THE SPINE.

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FORCED reduction of curvatures of the spine, a remedy which during recent months has attracted so much attention, has been chiefly directed to the correction of the deformity in caries, and (as far as this country is concerned) little notice has been taken of its application to cases of lateral curvature. Many cautious surgeons hesitate to run the risk, which apparently exists, when attempts are made to tear asunder inflamed and ulcerated vertebrae with the object of getting rid of the deformity in caries, but no such risk, I think, appertains to manual force applied to scoliotic spines.

A young man, aged 17, was sent to me on September 1st, 1897, by Dr. W. J. Foster, of Reading. He first began to fail in health at the age of 7, and the spine subsequently gave way. At the age of 13 he suffered from severe rheumatism. A year ago it was noticed that the right shoulder was projecting backwards. Recumbency was advised, and an inefficient apparatus was applied, but the spine had been getting worse ever since. There is a family history of phthisis.

Fig. 1 (from a photograph) represents the patient when I first saw him. He was sitting in his ordinary attitude, and could only sit up a very slight degree straighter, for a moment, when he made an effort. The white line shows the positions of scapulae.

On September 7th I applied force to the curve. The patient was placed upon a prone couch, the level part of which supported the chest, abdomen, and pelvis, the legs sloping downwards to a foot rest. I stood over the patient and applied almost as much pressure as I could exert with my right hand upon the prominent dorsal curve, while with the left hand I supported the patient's left shoulder in the contrary direction. The pressure was made downwards as well as to the patient's left, with the object of rotating the spine towards a normal position. In making this movement the ribs on the left side were seen to assume a more natural position, partly filling up the great hollow of that region. The spine was

thus considerably straightened. The patient felt sharp pain at the time of pressure, but this went off in a few moments. I then applied a light apparatus to keep up the improvement produced.

On September 16th the patient reported himself as feeling much better in health, and he stated that he could sleep quite comfortably in the instrument. I again applied force in the same way as before with the same result, that is the spine was made distinctly straighter. The following week he again reported himself as feeling much better and stronger, and I again applied force and again straightened the spine considerably.

In making these forced reductions something was heard and felt to give way, like the breaking down of adhesions.

This patient was very plucky, and was able to bear the operation without an anæsthetic, but it is probable that the majority of patients would be more easily dealt with while under the influence of gas or ether.

Fig. 2 (from a photograph taken three weeks after commencement of treatment) represents the amount of improvement produced. The patient was able to maintain this position quite comfortably during the ten seconds necessary for the exposure of the photographic plate. With the help of the apparatus he was able to maintain even a better position. The white line shows the positions of scapulae; level.

In estimating the benefits likely to be derived from this method of treatment, I may say that I have found that whatever position can be attained by apparatus can always be reckoned upon to become permanent in the course of time.

MCGILL UNIVERSITY.—Mr. W. C. McDonald, already a munificent benefactor of McGill University, Montreal, has founded and endowed an additional chair of chemistry. Mr. McDonald recently erected, at a cost of nearly £50,000, a chemical institute for the university. He has now given also a sum of £40,000 to supplement the existing endowments associated with his name, in order to provide for any deficiency in income which may result from the fall in the rate of interest on investments.