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THE SURGICAL TREATMENT OF GENERAL PURULENT PERITONITIS.*

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Many years ago a Mr. Bates, of Sudbury, England, drew the attention of the medical profession to the use of large and frequently repeated doses of opium and the rigid adherence to the horizontal position in the treatment of acute general peritonitis. In a pamphlet issued he related, in an unpretending manner, a number of cases of this disease treated as above mentioned. This pamphlet was subsequently brought to the attention of Dr. Watson, the writer of a celebrated work on Medicine, published about the year 1848.

The principle adopted by Bates was that of keeping the intestines at rest. In discussing the treatment of acute peritonitis Watson says that he himself used the two grand remedies for inflammation, namely, blood-letting and mercury, and further, that these remedies were especially beneficial in treating the adhesive inflammation of serous membranes. He also believed that the abdomen should be covered with leeches for the topical extraction of blood.

The schools were then, as now, divided as to the desirability of administering purgatives in the treatment of peritonitis. The opium treatment of Bates was then brought prominently before the profession by Dr. Alonzo Clark, who died in 1887, in New York City, aged eighty-one years. For fifty years he had been actively engaged in the practice of his profession. Graduating from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New York, he was soon appointed Professor of Pathology in the Vermont Medical College, and subsequently became Professor of Physiology and Pathology in the New York College of Physicians and Surgeons. He never attempted surgical

* at Meeting of Ontario Medical Association, June, 1903.