

Surgery.

TREATMENT OF INDOLENT ULCERS.

BY GEORGE L. BEARDSLEY, A. M., M. D.

Few can take issue with me that this kind is the most refractory. It not only resists change, but will often promise obedience and fairly commence repair, when, suddenly, the granulations collapse and wither, and the surface, which had begun to contract, soon has outskirts as free as before. The reason for these freaks is not so much the perverseness of the inflammation, nor any extraordinary acidity of the discharges, but a paucity or poverty of the blood. Long ere the ulcer announces its arrival, the tone of the economy is somehow degraded. Irritation can never, *per se*, breed a chronic ulcer. It wants the help of flabby fibre and poorly oxygenated blood. The sore, then, proves asthenic (*affaiblissement*), with a species of toxicohæmia.

The way to heal it is to interfere with the liberties of the noxious intruder, to make it abort. Mercury resolves this force very well, particularly when combined with iodine. To such a modifying influence on the blood, the use of chalybeates, to correct any inertia, is to be advised. Cod-liver oil pays good interest also. Its employment in these cases forced itself on me by virtue of its nutrient properties. Far am I from being a sanguine apostle of the faith that this oil acts as a solvent of deposits. In phthisis it is useful only because it supplants a loss of oil globules; and I have fancied some analogy between the disassimilation in tuberculosis and ulceration, so far as a proneness to waste is concerned. An indolent ulcer of two years' standing cicatrized in three weeks under the exclusive administration of the oil. Even when it fails to build up the wearied fibres, it seems to fortify the surrounding field against subsequent inroads, by supplying it with an extra amount of pabulum. It is, in a word, food, not medicine.

The diet is to be changed at the outset. Patients, especially the illiterate, bolt at believing that errors of living or the quality of food do much in provoking disorders of health. They are led, with no compunctions of good

sense, to reason that a sore is as independent a lesion as a bruised eye; account for it as an accident; beg of you to confirm their version by swallowing, without hesitation, the history they have learned by heart; honestly repudiate the possibility of the blood as at fault; and stock confidence in some wash of Indian fame, or some salve stirred and blessed by an antediluvian dame. The sooner this superstition is scouted the better. Fermented liquors are first to be forbidden. Nine-tenths of ulcer cripples are whisky bibbers or pedestrian beer-tubs. To epicures or "high livers," a diet strictly vegetable and farinaceous is to be adapted. A change from animal to fish food is necessary, and all stimulants or condiments must be discontinued. The purpose, in brief, is to lessen the excess of fibrin, and to annihilate the gouty diathesis. The converse holds for the poor in body. Here we must add wealth to the blood. The problem, it must be confessed, is not easy. Sparse means face the exigencies of most every case, and the cry of the tissues at the injustice done them goes unhushed. It is no marvel, then, that the crops of ulcers are the most exuberant with the labouring population. Yet some variation in diet can be planned. Fresh meat and fruits, with the cereal products, are within the reach of the purses of the majority, and store the blood in good degree with its appropriate funds.

The laws of cleanliness must be enforced. Indolent ulcers cohabit with the dirty classes. The skin is always diseased, either because charged with armies of acari or through absorption of foul exudations. Eczema and scorbutic rashes are firm friends to these sores. Soap suds without stint will make the *real estate* shrink in value, while sulphur and alkaline baths will restore respectability to the degraded integument. The clothing is to be changed every day and disinfected.

In the topical treatment, there are three indications: (a) to keep the border from growing indurated, (b) to stimulate, (c) to support.

No ulcer can heal if its belt is thick or heavy with lymph. It is just this hard tissue that has none of the groundwork for cicatrization and is to be removed. Poulticing was the old plan. Its success lay in its creating a slough