

## TREATMENT OF DISEASED JOINTS BY ESCHAROTICS.

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I AM permitted the honour of addressing you, sir, and the Members of the British Medical Association, upon the subject of diseases of the bones and joints, principally with regard to a new mode of treatment by incision, and the deep introduction of caustic, (the potassa c. calce,) into the cancellated structure of the articulating extremity of the bone in the incipient stage, or that of inflammatory congestion, and into the joint itself in the very advanced periods. I believe that the present era of the Profession is peculiarly apt for the consideration of this subject, inasmuch as the literature of this portion of surgery is daily becoming more and more unsettled and contradictory, some surgeons of highest authority advocating early operative interference, whilst yet the constitution is unimpaired by the exhausting progress of disease; other distinguished men putting their faith in rest, with proper mechanical adjustment, and advising that patient trust should be placed in the healing operations of nature.

Between those contrasted extremes every variety of opinion and practice may be found to prevail, as boldness excites to action, or caution inclines to delay.

The statistics of conservative surgery, more particularly of the great revived operation of the knee-joint, are the reverse of satisfactory; the high expectations formed from the successful cases have not been fulfilled by a sufficient percentage of cures, and in many instances the reported cures have not been permanent.

In the last work on joint diseases, published this year by Mr. Holmes Coote, of Bartholomew's Hospital, the following conclusions are arrived at, based on the statistics of Dr. Hodges, of Boston:—"Considering the mortality after the operation, excision for hip disease does not merit a very favourable verdict. Excision at the knee, although occasionally yielding brilliant results, is an operation to be practised with great reserve. Excisions at the wrist-joint being followed by a large proportion of failures, and when successful, the usefulness of the hand being so limited, are operations not sanctioned by sound judgment or conservative surgery. Operations on the foot for strumous disease, usually yield unsatisfactory results."

Dr. Hodges, of Boston, in his "Essay on the Excision of Joints," observes:—"Out of a considerable number of cases, one-third died, and more than one-third are known to have failed." I repeat then that a