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Criticism and News.

Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms. All Letters and Communications to be addressed to the "Editor Canada Lancel, Toronto."

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ACUPUNCTURE.

The operation of acupuncture for the relief of the pain of chronic rheumatism, lumbago, sciatica, etc., dates back for ages. It was, hundreds of years ago, a stock operation with the Orientals, who often produced wonderful results by it. The Chinese and Japanese practise it largely to this day, and there is no doubt their success is often marvellous. English and American surgeons have not been able to obtain very favorable results from the operation, or at least the results have been at all times looked upon as being very uncertain. In a majority of properly selected cases the effects are prompt, and the patient is both bewildered and delighted at the relief he has obtained from pain and disability, by so simple means. But owing to the fact that explanation of the cause of cure, when it does occur, is difficult, if not impossible, and that failure is not improbable, it is not much practised by English-speaking surgeons. No doubt there are many practitioners in this country who have never done the operation, or have never seen it done, and yet it is so simple of performance, and the relief so immediate when it is obtained at all, that we think it might be practised more frequently, with profit to a considerable class of patients. That terrible enemy to rest and comfort, sciatica, is unfortunately least amenable to treatment by this method, failure being more frequent than in lumbago or chronic rheumatism, but we have seen a patient with sciatica rise up and look as if he wished to call the operator blessed after five minutes with the

needles. The relief here is seldom permanent, usually lasting from a few moments to an hour. It is mostly of service in rheumatism of the muscles, of a chronic character, being contra-indicated when there is much redness, swelling or heat of the affected part. It is perhaps in lumbago that the success of acupuncture is most signal; a patient being relieved at once of all muscular disability and pain, by the introduction of two needles, one on each side of the spine to the depth of an inch or so.

The atrophy, due to impaired nutrition of muscular tissues whose fasciæ and aponeuroses are affected, generally disappears when pain and disability are relieved. Pain is not so often cured as muscular disability. The needles should be flexible, at least two inches long, either round or cutting-edged, and of the size of a medium-sized darning-needle. Indeed the operator may easily improvise capital instruments, by moulding handles of sealing wax, upon half a dozen ordinary darning-needles. The needle is dipped in some antiseptic solution, such as carbolic oil (1 in 40) and then introduced with a rotary motion, deeply into the tissues, even till it touches the bone. The region of greatest disability, pain, or tenderness is chosen for the points of puncture, and the needles are left in from two to ten minutes. Sometimes the effect is magical, the pain ceasing on the introduction of the needles but oftener in successful cases there is a decrease in the symptoms for some minutes, and in entirely successful cases the relief is soon complete.

It is said that when the action of the needles is beneficial, a red areola, from one to two inches in diameter is observed around each point of puncture, and that the appearance of this areola is in direct proportion to the success of the operation. This is not always true, for we have seen cases in which a very considerable amount of improvement took place, with no such areola perceptible. The number of needles need not be limited, for it is believed that the success of their action depends more upon their number than upon the length of time they are left in. In those forms of myalgia left after injury to a joint, relief is very frequently found from acupuncture, though metastasis may occur, and the pain may pass to the similar situation on the opposite side of the body. If there be extensive muscular atrophy, galvano-puncture