

also an enormous fecal impaction, and its discovery was preceded by several months' suffering from pruritus of the most obstinate variety. The itching was felt up in the rectum beyond the internal sphincter.

It occurred to me that the cause of the pruritus was not any local condition of the anal tissues, nor that famous refuge of ignorance, a "neurosis," but was perhaps an irritating discharge from the retained and necessarily decomposing fecal mass. Instead of applying local remedies I administered a few granules of laxatives each evening, and a moderate dose of effervescent magnesium sulphate in the morning. The pruritus at once subsided. Since then the patient has been instructed to look upon the itching as an evidence of retention of feces, insufficiency of the daily evacuations.

Like so many cases in which pain is present, the suffering of pruritus is one of nature's methods of calling attention to a difficulty that needs attention. Instead of seeking to smother the evidences of something wrong, we may with advantage investigate the causes of the phenomenon.

Whether many cases of anal pruritus can thus be explained I do not know. Possibly many; it is a matter for observation by the profession at large. But if these cases are confirmed by others we may find in pruritus a valuable aid in diagnosing fecal retention before more serious symptoms arise.

MEDICAL THOUGHTS, FACTS, FADS AND FALLACIES.

BY JAMES S. SPRAGUE, M.D., STIRLING, ONT.

The most irreconcilable enemies that one, that is, you and I have, are too frequently those of our own household, and as proof of this statement I have before me two medical journals and one almanac. Both journals have their homes in the United States; neither one is purely ethical, for the word ethical is found to be applicable as an adjective to two, only two United States medical journals, one of which is published in California and the other in Pennsylvania. In neither of these journals can you find any notice or endorsement or reference to a quack or proprietary compound. Think of it, brother,—only two ethical, of the three hundred medical journals in the United