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Original Communications.

TREATMENT OF SURGICAL WOUNDS.

By W. H. HINGSTON, M.D., L.R.C.S.E., D.C.L., Surgeon to Hotel Dieu, Professor of Clinical Surgery, Montreal School of Medicine.

[Read before Canada Medical Association at Ottawa, September 2nd, 1880.]

More than two hundred years ago, Ambroise Paré, who loved to style himself Conseiller et Premier Chirurgien du Roy, under the head, De la curation des playes en général, wrote in quaint old French thus: "Le chirurgien pour la curation des playes se doit proposer une commune indication, qui est union des parties divisées, laquelle est notoire, mesme aux idiots. Car ce qui est séparé, montre facilement qu'il doit être rejoint, d'autant qu'union est contraire à division; mais par quel moyen, et comment la dite union doit être faite, n'est cogneu d'un chacun."

A gaping wound, caused by the surgeon's knife (and to this class alone allusion is made in this paper), appeals as eloquently for closure and union, as did the poor dumb mouths in the body of the dead Cæsar. The mode and manner of making the wound are laid down with a precision almost mathematical, and those mechanical actions, directed by the hand, à titre de remède sur l'homme infirme ou malade, have their

limits accurately defined. Not so, however, the treatment of the wound thus made.

Yet are there but two methods of treating wounds; but two general methods, however widely they may be made to differ in detail. 1st, to obtain immediate union, or by first intention; or, 2nd, to obtain mediate union, or by second intention.

It is not necessary to allude to that third quasi method, secondary immediate intention, the "*réunion immédiate secondaire*" of French writers.

It is not long since union by second intention was alone spoken of; and surgeons the most distinguished had the habit of, either through ignorance or design, preventing that union by first intention which modern surgeons so much desire, yet not always acting as if desirous of obtaining it.

The time is past for filling the wound with compresses of lint, or of sponge steeped in some irritating fluid, as the ancients did; or for having them touched with heated irons, as Heliodorus did; or for filling them with garlic or salt, honey, flour or eggs, as Paul of Eginæta did; or with styptics, as the Arabs did; or with a bag of wool, as Helden did; or with a bullock's bladder, as Wiseman did; or with other equally ingenious methods of defeating the object had in view in the treatment of most surgical wounds, the most elegant perhaps, yet not the least mischie-