

TREATMENT OF BURNS BY THE APPLICATION OF ALCOHOL

In the *Australian Medical Journal* of Jan. 4th, Dr. E. T. C. Milligan has described a method of treating burns which he has found more satisfactory than the current methods. In burns of the second, third and fourth degree, cleansing with antiseptic lotions is usually recommended. The moisture causes the sloughs to become septic—in other words, converts dry into moist gangrene. Frequent and painful dressings are then necessary. Dr. Milligan excludes water from the treatment, and applies alcohol. He thus prevents moist gangrene and inflammation and saves much suffering. A child, instead of spending several months in hospital, can soon have the burn grafted and run about. The details of the method are as follows: If the patient is in such a state of shock that he cannot stand an anesthetic, a watery saturated solution of picric acid is applied on lint and protective is put over this to prevent evaporation. On the next day the protective is lifted and more of the solution is poured over the lint, which is not changed. On the third day the patient is either obviously going to die or can stand an anesthetic. If the picric acid be continued any longer the burn will become offensive. Dr. Milligan has not found the picric acid treatment of burns satisfactory, and simply uses it in the absence of anything better for a patient in a condition of shock. Moreover, the acid is absorbed and may cause toxic symptoms. If the patient is in a condition to allow the administration of an anesthetic he is given chloroform, and the burns are cleansed with sterile gauze wrung out of 70 per cent. alcohol. The whole surface of the burn and the surrounding skin is rubbed vigorously. Blisters are rubbed off with all dead tissue. No blister is pricked, nor is the dead skin allowed to remain to keep fluid pent up only to be infected by the organisms of the skin. Dead tissue is more effectively and easily rubbed off than removed with scissors and forceps. After thorough cleansing a dressing of sterile gauze wrung out of the alcohol is applied. Over this dry gauze and wool are applied, and then a bandage. Under chloroform the same process is repeated daily. Every other day will not do, for the burns begin to be septic and offensive. The parts are rubbed, not wiped, with gauze wrung out of alcohol. On beginning to remove the dressing it will be found stuck to the surface. By pulling upon it bits of dead tissue are satisfactorily removed. The dressings are continued for about eight days, when burns which have not destroyed the whole thickness of the skin will be found in such a clean state that boroglyceride gauze or gutta-percha tissue can be