

TETANUS*

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It is not my intention to enter into a comprehensive discussion of tetanus, but merely to report a case which occurred in my own practice a few months ago.

On December 28th, 1911, I was called out to see G. S., a farmer, fifty years of age, who had got his left thumb crushed in the gearing of a gasoline engine, which he used for cutting feed for his stock, and also for sawing wood. The engine was therefore used around the barn or in the woodyard, two very likely places to find the tetanus bacillus.

As he lived a considerable distance out in the country, and at the time the roads were bad, it was about two hours after the accident before I was able to see him. In the meantime they had wrapped the injured part up in some old cotton, which, though not sterilized, had been recently washed. As the bleeding was very profuse, they made no attempt to cleanse the wound, but merely wrapped it up in the oil and dirt, of which there was a liberal supply. On examination I found the terminal phalanx and about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of the distal end of the first phalanx ground to a pulp. The fleshy part of the thumb was very badly mangled and a large amount of oil and dust was ground into it. The bone was absolutely bare as far as the metacarpophalangeal joint.

I cleansed the wound first with gasoline, to remove as much of the oil as possible, then scrubbed it with a sterile nail brush and 1-60 carbolic acid solution until all dirt was apparently removed. I then rounded off the distal end of the remaining part of the first phalanx with bone forceps and succeeded in getting enough tissue to cover it very nicely. I dressed it with bismuth formic iodide and plain sterile gauze, applied a splint, and kept the hand in a sling.

I saw him on the following day and he was quite comfortable. Had rested well all night without an opiate, and his temperature and pulse were both normal. I saw him again on the second day. His temperature was then 100°, pulse 80. I removed the dressing, but the wound was perfectly dry; there was no swelling or pain, so I simply put on a fresh dressing similar to the previous one, and as his bowels had not moved since the accident I gave him a laxative, and the following day he reported that he was feeling much better.

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