

REPORT OF CASES OF SPONTANEOUS AMPUTATION.

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Such reports as these should be interesting, inasmuch as they show that occurrences so rare are occasionally taking place amongst us, and also refresh our memories with the fact that unaided nature sometimes effects the most marvellous cures. Two cases have come under my notice inside of the last seven years, which I shall briefly describe.

Case I. A woman, aged about 62 years, married, and the mother of a large family, had worked hard, eaten plenty of coarse food, and had been generally healthy, was attacked in the spring of 1864 with chronic gangrene, commencing in one of the small toes.

She had been attended by another physician for about a month, when I first saw her. I found all the smaller toes of the affected foot, hard, shrivelled, and black, the great toe and foot, up to a line drawn from the heel over the instep, and passing around just beneath the malleoli, dead, partially denuded of cuticle, still moist, but becoming dry and hard, and emitting a very offensive odor.

The low inflammatory process that heralded the mortification, was extending slowly and steadily upwards, and accompanied by the most excruciating pain. Restorative treatment with a free administration of opiates, poultices of various kinds, water dressing, stimulating and sedative applications were severally resorted to, without arresting the advance of the disease until it extended to about the middle of the leg.

Here the line of demarcation formed, and the work of separation began, when the pain almost entirely subsided and the patient's general health began to improve.

This was about eight weeks from the time I first saw her. All entreaties and persuasions of friends were in vain to procure an amputation, she looked for nothing but death, and intended to die by the disease. But instead of dying her general health improved slowly, the dead flesh completely separated from the living, and fell from the bones, leaving them bare and black from the line of separation to the ankle joint, and the foot became dry and hard. The stump, or the tissue that formed the stump