

Correspondence.

FRACTURE OF THE SPINE.

To the Editor of THE CANADIAN PRACTITIONER:

DEAR SIR,—Following Dr. Welford's interesting paper on "Fracture-Dislocations of the Spinal Vertebrae," published in your last issue, I submit the report of a case which came under my observation three years ago.

S.K., æt. 35, carpenter, fell from a scaffold some thirty feet, striking upon his head and shoulder, and rendering him unconscious. Saw patient three hours after accident. Consciousness had returned. He expressed himself as feeling comfortable, with the exception of slight pain at the back of the neck. Pulse full, regular, without variation; breathing wholly diaphragmatic; motor paralysis complete from level of sixth cervical vertebrae; sensation normal to about seventh cervical, impaired for a few inches, and totally lost at level of second dorsal. Upon extension of spine with gentle rotation, crepitus was distinctly manifest, but no improvement of paralysis could be detected. Operative procedure was then suggested, as affording the only possible hope of relief.

A post-median incision showed the spine of the third cervical depressed and to the left of the median line, with fracture of the pedicle. The opposite lamina was then divided and the piece removed, revealing collapsed dura and complete laceration of the cord. No dislocation of the bodies of the vertebrae could be detected, nor any additional fracture. The closure and dressing of the wound completed our duty towards the patient, who expressed himself as being grateful for the exact prognosis which the operation enabled us to give. Death ensued in nine hours.

With the resources of modern surgery at our command, it appears that our duty is clearly indicated by the tone of the article previously referred to, and I cannot do better than repeat Dr. Welford's words: "Exploratory incisions in abdominal operations are to-day countenanced. . . . The operation could relieve any compression by removal of the posterior arches, and if laceration were present we would not be in any worse condition than before, with a great deal of doubt as to the prognosis removed."

Victoria, B.C.

ERNEST HALL.