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ALCOHOL AS AN ANTISEPTIC IN THE TREATMENT OF WOUNDS.—TRANSLATION.

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In a number of *La Emulacion*, a medical periodical published at the city of Merida, in Yucatan, there appears a communication by Dr. J. R. Sauri, on the above subject, which seems to us deserving of particular attention, as we are not aware that in American or European surgical practice, recourse to alcohol as an antiseptic has obtained to any important extent, if indeed its efficiency has been at all appreciated by the great majority of surgeons.

Dr. Sauri informs his readers that he was led to the employment of alcohol in the treatment of severe and extensive wounds, from having realized its value in the healing of trivial ones, and from the unfortunate issue of nearly all cases of the former class in the General Hospital of Merida, the foul air of which, consequent on defect of space and very defective means of ventilation, had long distressed him. The following will best exhibit Dr. Sauri's views:—

"It will not appear strange, in view of the outline I have given (of the defects of the hospital) that purulent infection was so common in the establishment, and that up to 1878, the wounded and the subjects of operation, almost with certainty died, despite of all the precautions taken to avert purulent infection. Under these circumstances we were led to make trial of the treatment of large wounds by alcohol, as our principal antiseptic. Previous to this time we had limited the use of this agent to wounds of the scalp and to small wounds in various parts of the body. The number so treated, and the results obtained by this

means, showed the value of the plan to be better than was obtained in practice, either in families or in the field.

We frequently receive into the hospital two classes of bad wounds:—"Those caused by machines armed with cutting blades, and those from crushing by loaded cars. The former come from the haciendas, and the patients are presented to us from six hours to forty after the accident, the knives of the machines, driven by steam, having cut off sometimes only the phalanges, but at other times the fore-arm and even the entire superior member, has been torn from its articulation with the trunk."

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"Practice has showed to me," says Dr. S., further on, "that alcohol, in contact with denuded surfaces, produces at the moment a sensation of heat, which is succeeded presently by a certain transient intumescence. I have observed that under the influence of this agent, an inflammatory condition of the wounds does not take place, or it has been reduced to a minimum of intensity; furthermore it promotes and facilitates cicatrization, opposing in many cases the formation of pus, or diminishing this secretion when it presents. This advantage, obtained in the treatment, might alone suffice to accredit it, since it almost certainly impedes the accidents of purulent putrid infection, which prove so fatal to patients. We speak not of it with magisterial authority; we merely desire to express the fact that the clinical observations collected by us in the General Hospital, have served as the basis of our judgment, whether in the regular dressing of wounds, or in the carrying through of amputations in those cases which urgently called for this process.

"It is proper, however, to observe that in certain much bruised wounds, which cannot be regularly adjusted, or in those in which suppuration is presented, or is of a yellowish or orange color, and of viscid consistence, I abstain from the employment of alcohol. Experience has shown me that in these circumstances the tendency to purulent infection is very strong, and I therefore endeavour to avert it by other means, as in the following case:—

The fore-arm had been torn off in its middle third, and desiring to save the rest of the limb, I dressed the wound as well as possible, applying