

ON THE CAUSE AND TREATMENT OF THE BAD ODOUR SOMETIMES ASSOCIATED WITH EXCESSIVE SWEATING OF THE FEET.

Dr. George Thin has recently made a fruitful investigation of this subject, the report of which is published in the *British Medical Journal* for Sept. 18, 1880, and from which the following is abstracted:—

The patient who has afforded me the opportunity of investigating the cause of the smell is a young woman, aged 22, who has suffered from evil-smelling feet, with soreness of the heels, for several years. Her hands are usually moist, or even wet, but are always odourless. The smell from the feet is not constant, disappearing in dry bracing weather, and reappearing when the weather is moist and depressing.

The first experiment I made was to subject the soles of the stockings and boots to the action of an antiseptic solution. The success was complete, the odour being entirely banished. The antiseptic precautions having been soon neglected, the smell returned, and I took the opportunity of investigating its cause more minutely.

The sole of the stocking, a few hours after it was put on, was found to be quite wet; and a stocking if worn for a whole day was so extremely offensive that, when held close to the nostrils, its overpowering fetor was comparable to that of putrid blood. The inside of the boot was equally wet and offensive; but at the very time that the stocking and boot smelt so strongly, the heel itself, exuding moisture profusely, had no disagreeable odour. The sole of the heel was reddened and tender, and macerated around the edge, like a washerwoman's palm.

The reaction of the moisture in the stocking and in the sole of the boot was alkaline, that of the moisture exuding from the skin of the sole of the heel faintly alkaline, whilst that of the perspiration of other parts of the body was acid.

The fluid from the sole of the heel was thus shown to be not pure sweat, the faintly alkaline reaction being doubtless due to the serous discharge accompanying the eczema set up by the local hyperidrosis.

The fluid in the sole of the stocking was found to be teeming with bacteria forms, the nature and development of which I have carefully investigated. These investigations have produced results of some scientific interest, which I have communicated to the Royal Society*. The rapid development of bacteria in the fluid which exudes from the soles is doubtless favored by the alkaline reaction produced by the mixture of serous exudation with the sweat.

The treatment instituted in this case is as simple

as it has been effective. The stockings are changed twice daily, and the stocking-feet are placed for some hours in a jar containing a saturated solution of boracic acid. They are then dried, and are fit for wear again if it be desired. The boracic acid effectually destroys the smell. But to kill the bacteria in the stocking is not enough. The leather in the bottom of the boot is wet and sodden, and smells as vilely as the stocking. This difficulty is got over by the use of cork soles. I directed my patient to get half a dozen, which she finds sufficient. A pair must only be worn one day unchanged; at night, they are placed in the boracic jar, and are put aside the next day to dry. If these directions be accurately carried out, the evil smell is perfectly destroyed.

The boracic acid solution is an excellent application to the painful skin in these cases. When the tender skin of the soles is washed with it, a sensation of coolness succeeds the feeling of heat and tension which are the usual accompaniments of the eczematous condition associated with the smell, and the skin becomes harder and loses its abnormal redness.

The bacteric fluid would seem to act as a direct irritant to the skin. My patient assures me that if she wears stockings which have been dried without being disinfected, irritation is speedily felt; and that the cork soles, if worn a second day without having been purified, act in a similar way.

AN OPINION ON BLOOD-LETTING.

It requires no little courage to confront the popular prejudice as Dr. Hiram Corson does in the following passage, taken from a paper on pneumonia communicated to the Philadelphia *Medical Reporter*:

"I have been in active practice continuously for fifty-two years, and during all that time have not once had occasion to believe that there was any change in the human system or in the climate, which made it more hazardous to treat acute inflammatory affections by means of cups or leeches and other anti-febrile remedies, than it was in the beginning of my career. I am therefore free to declare that it is just as safe to use them now, and they are quite as efficient, as they were in the days when the physicians of Philadelphia were using them so freely, with so much confidence and with so great success. Surgeons now perform fearful operations, by which not only is a great amount of blood lost, but the patient is also injuriously affected by the shock to the nervous system, yet the recoveries are oftentimes astonishingly rapid. Women in time of childbirth often flood until they are in the very presence of death, and yet, when it is arrested, they will in a few days be found as bright and cheerful as if nothing had happened, soon regain their usual strength and have no disability from their loss of blood. They bear it as well now

* On *Bacterium foetidum*: an organism associated with profuse sweating of the soles of the feet. (Proceedings of the Royal Society, No. 205, 1880.)