

ON THE APPLICATION OF SOLID NITRAS ARGENTI IN THE GONORRHOEA OF WOMEN.

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Gonorrhœa in the female is commonly said to be a very curable disease. It is certainly much more so than in the male; but on practical investigation of this disease, I found that it was not so curable as has been supposed—at least by the means commonly used. I tried every form and combination of astringents, particularly that of zinc; half an ounce of each in a pound of boiling water was my common injection. This occasionally effected a cure in eight or ten days; but for one case in which this took place in the time specified, ten resisted the treatment for three or four weeks. The records of Lock Hospitals bear this out to the full; and cases so treated often returned on leaving off the remedy. I had no better success from the solutions of the nitrate of silver; they were indeed, generally less effectual than the other; besides the method of injection is apt to be so irregularly pursued by the thoughtless characters in Lock Hospitals, that it will seldom be carried into complete and proper execution. It is a common boast of such persons how little they have regarded the injunction of the practitioner in this particular. I know one case where a woman used the alum and zinc injection just twice in nineteen days, whilst the practitioner fancied she was using it three or four times daily. It becomes of importance—of the utmost importance—that the treatment in case of Lock Hospitals be of such a kind as that the practitioner can either administer it himself, or be assured that it be done. The remedy to be noticed has this great merit; and if it had not half the efficacy which I know it to have, it would surpass all others on that account in the institution above-named. I had long tried in vain, and I repeat, had found very useless, the injections of an astringent kind.

Having noticed that some cases of gonorrhœa, with ulceration in the vagina, and to which I had freely applied the nitras argenti, stopped in a most extraordinarily short period, I determined to select a few cases of uncomplicated gonorrhœa for trial. I accordingly did so, and found the effects to be very striking. I have repeatedly seen the discharge cease, never

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to return, in twenty-four hours. On the day after the application, I have often seen it changed in character, that is, loses its purulent form, and disappears in twenty-four hours more. The discharge changes from the purulent to a thinner, clearer fluid, and ceases, I say in twenty-four hours thereafter, simply by using a weak solution of acet. plumbi., or only tepid water, as a wash. I have kept such cases repeatedly under my eye for a month, and can declare, that in the proportion of 95 to 100, there was no return of the discharge; yet no remedy had been employed after the nitrate. Though in some few cases there is a little pain produced, yet in by far the greatest number of instances, no pain is experienced from the introduction and most free application of the caustic. It is painful, it is true, when it touches sores on the labia, or more internal parts, but that smarting soon goes off, or, at all events, an anodyne instantly relieves it. In the greater number of cases it produces no phlogosis of the parts with which it comes in contact; but in some (say in one case in twenty) it does irritate to a degree that proves painful for a few hours, but never, in any one instance, have I seen the pain continue longer than a few hours. I have never seen bubo induced by it. I have used it in patients in every month of pregnancy with the best effects, and never saw abortion produced. I know, by as careful examination as I could make, that it does not suppress the catamenia: in short, I fearlessly give it out as an infallible and safe remedy for this disease, without any one drawback but the vain fears of persons of no experience, or of such as are determined to oppose it. I have now employed it in above 300 cases with unvarying success, and shall continue to use it.

I am the more particular in the notice of the above groundless evils and vain fears, since I have heard them repeatedly stated as likely to be overwhelming objections against the practice—but only by persons, I must say, who have never seen the method practised. I know, on the most ample experience, that these objections are without any foundation whatever. I am at all times very unwilling to come forward with my remarks before the public, but I have no alternative; I must now speak out for myself, as I understand the treatment has been freely canvassed in the Glasgow Medical Society, where the inexperienced, on the strength of some eight or ten cases, attempted to demolish

the careful observations (conducted before persons of competent judgment, and whose certificates are appended) of several years, and on hundreds of cases. I had the honour of introducing the practice into the Dublin Lock Hospital in August last, and I hope we shall be favoured with a report from that extensive and well-conducted institution. I may add, that in about six cases only, out of more than three hundred, the vaginal discharge has continued after repeated applications: in all of these I found, by the use of the speculum vaginæ, that there was ulceration of the lining membrane of the vagina, and that the case was not gonorrhœa.

The application of the nitrate was not required more than once in 280 of the 300 cases. I may also add, that in two obstinate cases, I found the disease to be kept up from *urethral discharge*, whilst that from the vagina had ceased. I then applied the nitrate to the urethra, and a cure was accomplished in both instances,—in one by a single introduction of the pencil, and in the other it required to be once repeated, at an interval of four days.

So far from the catamenia being suppressed by it, I have known more instances than one of the catamenia flowing for the first time after a long obstruction, on the use of the nitrate. I am so conscious of the benefit and complete success of the remedy in question, that I commit it to the profession, to whom I should not venture to make statements so confidently, unless I believed myself standing on pretty sure grounds.

I shall conclude by describing my method of using it. I introduce a stick of nitrate of silver into a quill, and tie a thread firmly round the lower part of the quill to fasten the caustic, which I leave projecting beyond the quill about half an inch. I generally smear the quill with a little lard, and introduce the *nitras argenti* up to the os tincæ, or as far as it can be made to ascend in the vagina. I then deliberately and slowly withdraw it, turning it round so as to bring it in as extensive contact as possible with the lining membrane of the vagina. I may add, that by accident, the nitrate of silver has more than once broken in the vagina, and could not be found. It caused me much alarm and anxiety at first, but after the following case I was not so affected; and though I would carefully avoid it, I now regard the occurrence as of very little importance.

The late Mr. John Hebertson, who acted as my assistant in the hospital, came

in breathless haste, and in the utmost state of alarm, to call me to his assistance to extract a piece of nitrate of silver from the vagina of a woman, who having previously been in the hospital, and cured by the use of the remedy in question, came to Mr. H. to have it again applied. On repairing to the house, we searched in vain for the caustic, but had abundant proofs that it had dissolved in the vagina. The quantity he asserted to be above two drachms. She suffered little or no pain, and a perfect cure was straightway accomplished.—*Medical Gazette*.