

## COMPRESSION FRACTURES OF THE SPINE.

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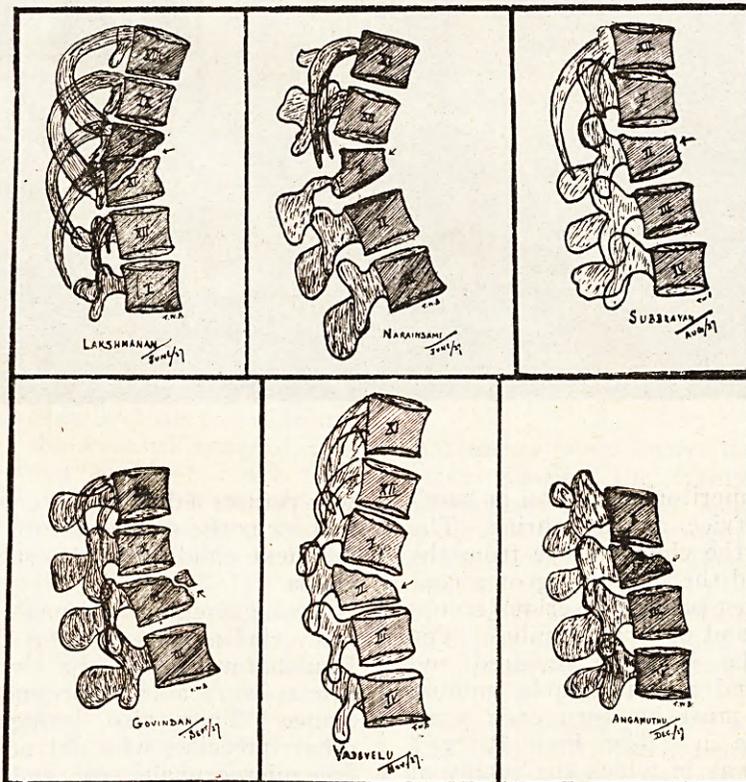
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SEVEN cases of "traumatic spondylitis" which were admitted in the senior author's wards during the past year and whose notes have been collected by his House Surgeon, Mr. R. Mahadevan, suggest that compression fractures of the vertebræ are not so rare as is commonly supposed. Obscure back injuries to coolies engaged in lifting heavy bales or to toddy-drawers who fall from a tree directly on to the buttocks are often of this nature. The illustrations are pantograph drawings taken by Captain T. W. Barnard from the original

hospital after nearly 12 months, able to walk and fit for light work.

2. Narayanswami, peon, 30 years, male, Hindu, fell from a cocoanut tree on his buttock a month before admission to the hospital and was unable to get up for a fortnight. Walks with stoop and a rigid back. Prominence in the region of 11th dorsal to 1st lumbar spine. No paralysis of muscles or loss of sensation. X-ray showed fracture of body of 1st lumbar vertebra, wedge-shaped. Left hospital after three months, completely relieved, able to walk and return to work.

3. Lakshmanan, aged 25, male, Hindu, was lifting a heavy log of wood on one shoulder and suddenly felt severe pain in the middle of the back and sides, but did not fall down. Complains of difficulty in movement in the region of 10th dorsal vertebra and tenderness over the spine below the 8th dorsal vertebra. No nervous disturbance whatever. X-ray showed disorganisation of 10th and 11th dorsal vertebral bodies. Albee bone-graft operation.



radiographs and show the bone lesions very clearly.

1. Vadivelu, ryot, aged 18, male, Hindu, fell from a cocoanut tree 30 feet high on to his buttocks, 10 days previous to admission. Complains of inability to walk and pain in both hips. There was pain, tenderness and rigidity over the lumbar spine; no paralysis of muscles or loss of sensation. X-ray showed fracture of the body of the 2nd lumbar vertebra. Left

hospital after six months; pain almost completely relieved and patient walks about with comfort.

4. Angamuthu, cooly, aged 35, male, Hindu. A heavy weight fell on his back, complained of pain in the back when walking or standing up, pain and tenderness over the 2nd, 3rd and 4th lumbar spines. No nervous symptoms whatever. X-ray showed compression fracture of the body of the 2nd

lumbar vertebra. Left hospital after five days rest. Refused to stay till complete relief.

5. Subbarayan, cooly, aged 30, male, Hindu. A rice bag fell on his back from a cart two hours prior to admission to the hospital. Pain and swelling (hæmatoma) over the region of all the lumbar vertebræ. No paralysis, no disturbance of sensation. No loss of sphincter control. Pain in the region of the lumbar spines. X-ray showed compression fracture of the 2nd lumbar vertebra. Left hospital after one month. No pain or rigidity of spine.

6. Subramanian, aged 30, male, Hindu. A heavy weight fell on his back two years before admission to the hospital. Had pain in the inter-scapular and shoulder regions. Continuous severe pain in the upper dorsal region but no limitation of movement. Pain most marked in the region of the 3rd, 4th and 5th dorsal spines. No nervous symptoms whatever. X-ray showed fracture of body of 4th dorsal vertebra. Left hospital after ten days with symptoms relieved.

7. Govindan, ward boy, aged 30, male. Other caste. Fell from a tree 30 feet high; could not sit up or walk; pain in the back and tenderness over 2nd and 3rd lumbar spines. No nervous disturbance whatever. X-ray showed fractured body of the 2nd lumbar vertebra. Left hospital after two and a half months. Completely relieved.

Treatment of these patients once the lesion is recognised is easy and simple. An extension applied to both lower limbs and tied to the foot of the bed, which is raised to produce counter-extension by the patient's own body weight, is all that is necessary. In one patient an Albee bone-grafting operation was performed and was very successful, though one is not convinced that a simpler non-operative treatment might not have produced an equally good result.

In previous annual reports the senior author has recorded two patients—both boys—who had a compression fracture of the atlas vertebra following a fall from a height without any cord lesion, and who both recovered completely.

### A SIMPLE RAT-TRAP USED BY THE SHAN VILLAGERS OF THE NORTHERN SHAN STATES, BURMA.

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Two specimens of rat-traps in use by Shan villagers in the Northern Shan States of Burma have been sent me by Major H. F. L. Duckworth, I.M.D., Civil Surgeon and District Health Officer, Northern Shan States. These traps are of great interest because of their

ingenuity and simplicity of construction. They can be made up in any bamboo-growing country at next to no cost because they are constructed solely of bamboo wood and string.

Fig. 1 shows the trap in the "released" position. C is the chamber, a short length of bamboo of from 3" to 4" diameter and about 11" to 16" in length. One end of the bamboo is left open to form the entrance to the trap, while the other is closed by the natural "node" of the bamboo being left in position. In the trap illustrated, which is of fairly thick bamboo, the bottom is flattened down so that the

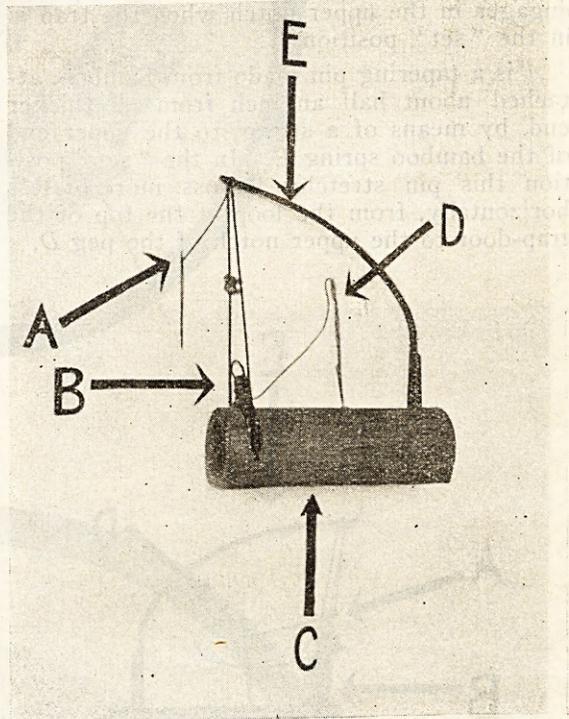


Fig. 1.

trap will stand by itself on the ground. In another model the natural curve of the bamboo is left and this trap has to be propped up against some adjoining object when set.

B is the trap-door, made of a flat disc of wood which drops down into a slot cut in the upper part of the chamber. The slot is almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide and extends the full width of the bamboo. The door fits loosely into it. On each side of the door a shallow groove is cut to take the string which operates the door mechanism. This string passes through a small hole observable on the side of the trap chamber just below the slot. A similar hole is present on the other side of the trap. At the top of the trap-door there is a small loop of string into which the thick end of the pin A is inserted when the trap is set. Whilst this is the arrangement in the trap illustrated, another model which I have has a small hole