

A CASE OF SNAKE-BITE.

(Communicated by DR. FAYREER.)

I HAVE been favoured by Assistant Surgeon Kali Pada Gupta, 24th Regiment P. N. I., Umritsur, with the following interesting cases of snake-bite (probably the snakes were *Bungarus ceruleus*) in which recovery, after hæmaturæa and hæmoptysis, occurred.

CASE I.—On the evening of 10th September, Sepoy Jumetha Singh was bitten by a snake on the inner border of the right foot, while he was returning from the latrines. He immediately ran to the regimental hospital, which was close by, and said that a black snake, about 3 feet long, had bitten him. The native doctor examined the foot, and found three small punctures from which there was a slight oozing of blood. He first applied a tight ligature above the ankle, and then touched the punctures with argenti nitras. He watched the man for upwards of two hours, during which no symptoms of drowsiness or stupor were developed.

He was perfectly conscious, and made no complaint except of the pain caused by the tight ligatures.

He was then left alone to sleep, which he could not get, perhaps, through fear. The next morning, the whole foot and the leg as far as the calf became swollen, hot and very painful, so much so, that he could not bear the slightest touch.

He complained of pain over the region of the kidneys, and said he was passing *red* urine, which to the naked eye appeared black, being as it were a solution of black venous blood. (The specific gravity and other clinical characters could not be noted for want of the requisite apparatus.)

He further complained of great prostration and weakness, I prescribed some diuretics with 10 drops of the tinctura ferri muriatis, which did not seem to have the slightest influence on the character of the urine, which continued black as before. The swelling gradually subsided and disappeared in four or five days. The hæmaturia lasted for ten days and then stopped of itself.

After the swelling had gone down and the hæmaturia had ceased, he began to feel better and to regain his usual health. He was discharged, quite well, on the 23rd September.

CASE II.—The second case was that of E.—P.—, an East Indian clerk, who on the evening of 18th September was bitten by a snake in the right foot at the inner ankle.

He had tied two ligatures, one of cloth and another of cord, before I was called to see him.

When I arrived I saw him surrounded by a number of people, one of whom was muttering some incantations and moving a bunch of leaves from above downwards; another putting a piece of stone said to have been taken out of the head of a very venomous snake, to the wound and expecting thereby to extract the poison.

I began to ask him a few questions about the snake, the time and place where he had been bitten, how he was then feeling, and so on. In the mean time, the muttering of incantations had ceased, and the piece of stone dropped, shewing, according to the charmer's own admission, that it had taken no effect.

I then incised the part where I had found three small punctures slightly bleeding, and touched it with argenti nitras.

As the person had not by this time felt drowsy or sleepy or any way queer, I undid one of the ligatures altogether and loosened the other. This was done after more than an hour had elapsed since the bite. I remained with him half an hour more, and having found no symptoms of poisoning, left him. Before leaving I told him to take a glass of brandy or some kind of spirits and go to bed. As might have been expected he could not sleep during the night.

I saw him the next morning, the foot and leg had become swollen and painful as in the other case. He said that he had been spitting black blood, and shewed me handkerchiefs and cloths all stained. He asked me to prescribe some medicine to arrest the hæmorrhage. I refused, and explained to him my reasons, saying that his blood had been poisoned, and nature was expelling it through one of the outlets. I suppose he was not well pleased, as he sent for the civil surgeon, who prescribed, I believe, some kind of gargle. I watched the case, however, with great interest. On the 5th day, there was a good deal of hæmorrhage from the wound itself which opened and poured forth black venous blood. It stopped of itself. The swelling had by that time gone down, and the spitting of blood decreased.

He suffered for about ten days, after which he felt all right.

He killed the very snake which bit him, and which he believes was the last snake in the compound of his house, and shewed it to me. I asked him to send it to Dr. Taylor, who told me he would send it down to Calcutta for inspection.

Now, the question arises—was the snake or snakes (though from the similarity of the symptoms in the two cases, I am inclined to believe it was the same kind of snake) poisonous?

The profuse hæmorrhage and great prostration of strength seem to point to the existence of poison. If this fact is established by the examination of the snake, the following observations may be made:—

1st.—As both the persons were grown-up adults, they did not succumb to the poison either because the bite was not so effectual as to kill, or the amount of poison in this particular snake was not powerful enough to destroy adult life.

2ndly.—And if the latter view be correct, then it will be interesting to ascertain by experiment or observation the effect of the bite of the snake on the lower animals, as fowls, dogs, cats, &c.

3rdly.—That in partially successful bites or bites by slightly venomous snakes, hæmorrhage of black venous blood seems to be nature's method of cure.

CASE OF GUN-SHOT WOUND OF THE HAND.

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PERHAPS, the following case may be considered worthy of being recorded, as showing very markedly the good effects of carbolic acid as an antiseptic dressing; at one period of the case, the symptoms of pyæmia were becoming very prominent, but every thing went smoothly after the use of the acid.

JAMES BROWN, aged 30, a rough north country mechanic, accustomed to drink a large quantity of spirits, by occupation a driver in the East India Railway Company's employ, was brought to me early one morning; he had been out with some comrades shooting, and the barrel of a cheap Birmingham gun which he was using had burst, shattering his left hand very extensively. He had lost a considerable amount of blood as he was being conveyed by trolley from Toondla, where the accident happened, to Agra, a distance of about 15 miles. On removing innumerable cloths soaked in blood, I found that the thumb with its metacarpal bone had entirely disappeared. The metacarpal bone of the index finger was, as it were, dissected out from the palm of the hand, completely denuded of flesh, and separated from the carpal bones with which it articulates; the scaphoid bone was bare and fractured into several pieces, and lastly, the soft parts in the palm were extensively lacerated. A very unfavourable state of affairs was thus presented; the man begged that his hand, rather what remained of it, might be spared, and knowing the importance of a finger, or even part of a finger, to a working man, I determined to attempt to save what remained of the hand. I removed the detached metacarpal bone with the index finger attached, as also the fragments of the scaphoid bone, and having tied the radial and some small branches and trimmed up the wound, the edges were brought together by sutures and water dressing applied. He went on very well for about a week, union apparently taking place; at the end of that time, on visiting him one day—he had in the meantime returned to Toondla—I found his pulse 140, with an irritable thrill, his tongue covered with a thick, creamy white fur, great restlessness and want of sleep, dry and hot skin, and the wound one mass of sloughs.

The sutures which remained were immediately removed, and the wound well washed with carbolic acid and water; strips of lint, soaked in undiluted acid, were then applied, and he was ordered a calomel purge and opium at bed-time. The effects were magical: he slept well; next day all the threatening symptoms had disappeared, and the sloughs showed signs of commencing to separate. A week afterwards the sloughs had separated leaving a clean granulating wound which was dressed *secundum artem*. Care was taken to keep the remaining three fingers extended on a splint. The wound healed entirely after six weeks, and at the end of three months, he returned to work as a fireman, and, using the three fingers as a kind of hook, he could handle a shovel very well.