

X.

Case of Suppression of Urine from Stricture, succeeded by Gangrene of the Arm. By S. MARSHALL, Surgeon, Leeds.

HAVING had to treat, some time back, what I conceive to be rather a complicated case, the one morbid affection following the other in immediate succession, I herewith send you the detail of it; in hopes of eliciting from some of your more enlightened readers, an opinion how far these generally irrelevant complaints stood in the relation to each other, in the present instance, of cause and effect.

J. E. an old worn-out quarter-master, while at sea, complained, on the 15th of May, of an inability to pass the bougie, (which he had been long in the habit of doing himself, on account of several strictures in the urethra,) in order to empty the bladder. I attempted, for some time, to introduce bougies of various sizes and forms, as well as catheters, but all to no purpose. As the belly was now become tense, from the fulness of the bladder, and the patient was in severe pain, I gave directions for the warm-bath to be prepared; but as this was likely, from the gallery fire having been put out, to occupy a considerable portion of time, he was put to bed, and ordered a draught of thirty drops of laudanum, and in two hours this doze was repeated, soon after which he fell asleep. I now began to revolve in my mind which would be the most eligible mode, on the failure of the warm-bath and other means, with the increased urgency of the symptoms, of puncturing the bladder. The great height, however, of one of the strictures, and the probable disease of the prostate gland, rendered the very simple and ingenious method recommended by Mr Astley Cooper impracticable, and I determined on that by the rectum. But, happily, during the sleep of the patient, the bladder was in part emptied involuntarily; and, on waking, he was enabled to pass the bougie as well as ever, and complete the evacuation. Thus far the issue of the case was favourable; but the poor old fellow only escaped this operation, bye and bye to undergo one, in his present state of debility and emaciation, rather more formidable. He passed a tolerably easy night, discharging a little urine frequently; but in the morning, on waking, found the use of the right arm entirely gone. On being called to him, I found the whole cubit benumbed, cold, and

stiff, and not the least pulsation of the brachial artery to be perceived in any of its course; nor was I more successful in feeling that of the subclavian, in passing over the first rib. The limb, above the elbow also, was robbed, in a great measure, of its vital heat, though not so completely as the lower portion. The hand and fingers, in particular, were completely dead. The pulse of the opposite wrist was at the same time very feeble, and his general debility very great. This I immediately began to combat with a more generous and fresh diet, wine, bark, and opiates; ordering the limb affected to be constantly stuped with warm fomentations, alternated with a strong solution of camphor in rectified spirit; but the vital warmth was gone for ever; and in spite of the unremitting exhibition of a variety of the most powerful stimuli, external, and internal, the fore-arm continued entirely devoid of sense. On the third day, the fingers became livid, and soon after, by degrees, the whole hand was also discoloured. At this time he complained of soreness from the elbow to the wrist, soon after which the latter part became also livid. On the 30th of May, (having waited some time for the line of separation forming between the mortified and sound parts, and this having now manifested itself in numerous vesicles, and an irregular kind of sulcus, a little below the elbow,) I suggested to the old man the propriety of amputation; but must confess, that my motive for this step was rather the removal of a nuisance, which, from its intolerable stench, had for some days distressed the whole crew, than any expectation of seeing my tottering patient recover after it; indeed, I had, for some time, been prepared for his sinking under his excessive debility. I, however, seized a favourable opportunity, when his vital powers were somewhat recruited, and performed the operation, with the assistance of my mate, and the purser; making the first incision a little above the elbow, and finishing it, with the loss of but about two drachms of blood. The result turned out far beyond my expectation. On the fourth day the wound was in some measure healed by the first intention, and in a month was firmly and completely cicatrized; and the old man, although in rough squally weather, and near the close of a long voyage, was in better health than he had been for a long time, insomuch that he was able to resume his post in directing the steersman.

Leeds, August 2, 1813.