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NATURE HER OWN SURGEON.

A curious case of a compound fracture, related by Dr. HUNTER at his lectures. Selected from CLARA'S essay on the cure of Abscesses, &c.

SPEAKING of the nature and cure of simple and compound fractures, Dr. Hunter observed in his lectures, that in treating the compound, many surgeons did mischief, and irritated the wound, by their officious and artificial manner of dressing it. Instead of that practice, he recommended treating the compound, as much as possible, in the same way as the simple fracture: and in confirmation of that practice, used to relate the following singular case, which was always heard with great attention, because the instruction was conveyed in the way of pleasantry.

"A maniacal patient, Mr. G——, who was confined in the Infirmary at Edinburgh, (he says it was about thirty years ago) forming to have recovered a calm and rational state of mind, was allowed to take a morning walk in the garden. Here he took a resolution of making his escape; and got over the garden wall. In dropping himself from the wall, which was very high, he pulled a large cape-fine along with him, and suffered a very bad compound fracture in his leg. He was carried round, and lodged again in the Infirmary, in this unhappy condition; and the surgeon, who was presently brought to him, set the leg, dressed the wound, applied the eighteen-tailed bandage, &c. in the usual way. After all this the patient appearing to be very calm, the surgeon gave some proper directions, went away, and the patient was left alone to get some rest, which was thought proper, and seemed to be his own desire. His madness now took a singularly whimsical turn: he knew very well that he had got a miserably broken leg; but his crazy imagination made him believe, that the surgeon had mistaken the leg, had bestowed all his cunning upon the sound leg, which required no attention, and had left the shattered limb to shift for itself. Under this firm persuasion, convinced that his surgeon was too ignorant to perceive his blunder, too conceited to be set right, and too proud to suffer such humiliation, he thought it would be most prudent, in his present state of subjection, for the cure of his broken leg, to make the best use he could of the judgment and dexterity which God had given him. He removed the whole apparatus from the broken leg, with great attention, that he might be able to apply it to the other leg, so exactly in the same manner, that the surgeon should not be able to discover the alteration; and, lest any suspicion should arise, and lead to an enquiry and discovery, he thought he should be still more secure by secreting or hiding the other leg, that it might not be found, and appear in evidence against him. He therefore tore a large hole in the sheet and featherbed, and buried the wounded leg among the feathers.

Next day, when the surgeon visited him, he said, that for a while he had been in pain, but that by a fortunate and accidental motion of the foot, the pain went off, as by a charm; that he had continued perfectly easy ever since; and therefore was resolved to keep it as steadily as possible in the same situation. The surgeon finding him easy, the pulse quiet, and no symptom whatever of fever, went to the foot of the bed, and lifting up the cloths, said, let us just see how the foot and leg

look. The patient, much alarmed with the proposal, and enquired him, for mercy's sake, to desist; because he said, the least motion in the world would disturb it, and bring all his pains back again. The surgeon assured him that the bed-cloths touched nothing but the cradle, and that the lifting them up could not in the least move either the leg or foot; and then, observing to the students that the appearance of the foot was as favourable as he could wish, he expressed his satisfaction, and went away. Every day's visit, after this, turned out equally satisfactory, both to the surgeon and patient, till the fifth or sixth day, when the surgeon grew very anxious to see the wound, lest any lurking mischief should be concealed, and was determined to remove the dressings. This the patient resisted, first with prayers, and then with imprecations and rage; but at last he was obliged to submit. The surgeon, with a cautious and tender hand, removed the bandages, and, as he went on, expressed the pleasure which he felt on seeing the skin, both above and below the wound, in so natural a condition. At length he lifted up the dressings, which he found were quite loose, and in the usual position, and, which, a few days before, he had seen in such a lamentable state, you can better describe than I can tell how he looked. After a short pause, he pulled his fingers along the tibia, and then said, I only know that a fracture and wound there certainly was, and now there is certainly neither. Presently he recovered himself enough to recollect that it was the other leg which he had set and dressed; and said, Where is the other leg? turning off the bed-cloths at the same time. Lunatics are quick in resources, not easily put out of countenance, and imagine that nobody can doubt what they assert. Mr. G——, sensible now that the leg would be discovered, drew it out from among the feathers, laying, with great expression of resentment and rage, that he would now expose the surgeon's ignorance to the whole world; that he always knew surgeons to be a set of ignorant fellows, though they wore large wigs and now he would prove it, by a shocking instance, to the satisfaction of all present. This leg, said he, holding out the broken leg with a great cake of blood and feathers crusted over and round the wound, this leg thank God! is as sound as any man's;—there, pointing to the other, is the broken leg—you see what a desperate condition it is in;—and that fellow, being called did nothing for it;—he was called to set a broken leg; but he did not know a broken leg, and bonned up this. After venting some more of his indignation and rage in scurrilous and coarse language, he begged that some of the young surgeons would bind up the broken leg again (naming the sound one) for that it was in great pain, was much disturbed with this impertinent examination, and, if not taken care of, would make him a miserable object, at best a cripple for life. The surgeon seeing his patient's imagination so strongly perverted, and being convinced by the agitation which that misapprehension had raised, that it would be, upon the whole, safer to indulge him in his wild conceits, with humanity as well as good sense, desired the young men to humour him by putting the apparatus on the sound leg. From that time he was calm, and, in all other things, reasonable. The cure went on with perfect success;—the scab of feathers at last dropped off;—the wound was then found to be healed, and the callus completed: A memorable lesson for surgeons, and a striking instance of the weakness of human reason, of the imperfection of our boasted art, and of the power of nature!"

Mr. SOWER.

Some time ago, we gave us directions respecting the recovery of drowned persons, the following hints for learning to swim, (and thereby prevent drowning) by Dr. Franklin in a letter to a friend, may be equally useful, tho' swimming is not very fashionable this time of the year.

I am your's, &c. Z.

Dear Friend,

I CANNOT be of opinion with you, that it is too late in life for you to learn to swim; the river near the bottom of your garden, affords a most convenient place for the purpose. And as your new employment requires your being often on the water, of which you have such a dread, I think you would do well to make the trial; nothing being so likely to remove those apprehensions, as the consciousness of an ability to swim to the shore in case of an accident, or of supporting yourself in the water till a boat could come to take you up.

I do not know how far corks or bladders may be useful in learning to swim, having never seen much trial of them. Possibly they may be of service in supporting the body, while you are learning; but it is called the *egg*, or that manner of drawing in and holding out the hands and feet that is necessary to produce progressive motion. But you will be no swimmer till you can place some confidence in the power of the water to support you; I would therefore advise the acquiring that confidence in the first place, especially as I have known several who, by a little of the practice necessary for that purpose, have insensibly acquired the stroke, taught as it were by nature.

The practice I mean is this: Choosing a place where the water deepens gradually, walk coolly into it till it is up to your breast, then turn round your face to the shore, and throw an egg into the water, between you and the shore; it will sink to the bottom, and be easily seen there, as your water is clear. It must lie in the water so deep as that you cannot reach it to take it up but by diving for it. To encourage yourself in order to do this, reflect that your progress will be from deeper to shallower water, and that at any time you may by bringing your legs under you, and standing on the bottom raise your head far above the water. Then plunge under it with your eyes open, throwing yourself towards the egg, and endeavouring, by the action of your hands and feet against the water, to get forward till within the reach of it. In this attempt you will find that the water buoys you up against your inclination; that it is not so easy a thing to sink as you imagined; that you cannot, but by active force, get down to the egg. Thus you feel the power of the water to support you, and learn to confide in that power; while your endeavours to overcome it and to reach the egg, teach you the manner of acting on the water with your feet and hands, which action is afterwards used in swimming to support your head higher above the water, or to go forward through it.

I would the more earnestly press you to the trial of this method, because though I think I satisfied you that your body is lighter than water, and that you might float in it a long time with your mouth free for breathing, if you would put yourself in a proper posture, and would be still, and forbear struggling, yet, till you have obtained this experimental confidence in the water, I cannot depend on your having the necessary preference of mind to recollect that posture, and the directions I gave you relating to it. The surprise may put all out of your mind. For, tho' we value ourselves on being reasonable knowing creatures, reason and know-