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SURGERY AMONG THE CHINESE.

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It will not fail to interest medical men who are concerned in the progress of our profession and the welfare of humanity the world over when we come to a discussion of surgery among the Chinese—the methods employed by them in combating diseases and the resources at their command in the treatment of accident and other surgical diseases in general.

Since the earliest days of China (3000 years B. C.) up to the present time the Chinese have had a system of the art of healing—surgical and medical—strictly and purely of their own, and it is not until very recently that the Chinese have adopted partially, modern medicine and surgery, or, as they term, "Western Medicine," since it came from the West—Europe and America. Since the opening of the first five China ports to foreign trade, Western medicine has slowly but surely gained its foothold in China, until now there is scarcely a port where there is no modern hospital, or a town where there are no Chinese doctors practicing modern medicine and surgery. Moreover, the Chinese Government officials have opened their eyes by establishing modern medical colleges at Tientsin and Peking and it has been decided that more are to be established in the principal cities and towns of every province. It will not be long before we will be able to find modern medicine and surgery taking the place of the old throughout China.

Now it is this strictly pure Chinese art of healing that I am going to discuss. I will not attempt to touch on modern medicine or surgery, as we all know very well what modern surgery is and how it is practiced.

Since surgery is based on anatomy and physiology, and as dissections on human bodies are not practiced in China—in fact they are not allowed as it is considered inhuman to open a dead body—therefore their notions on anatomy and physiology are absurd. Their descriptions of the structure and functions of the different internal organs are all from pure guesswork. The heart is supposed to be attached to the trachea and contains more air than blood. The lungs are believed to control the sense of smelling and to be the centre for the production of air. To the liver is assigned the office of controlling the sense of seeing, and the gall bladder controls the will power.

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Nothing has been written by them about surgical pathology and bacteriology, though from empirical experiences they know something about aseptics and antiseptics. They always boil their instruments before using and never wash any wound with unboiled water for fear, as they say, of suppuration. They have quite a number of substances used as antiseptics, their greatest favorites being preparations of mercury, borax and common salt.

Anæsthesia has been known since five thousand years ago. They could produce general anæsthesia as well as local. For producing local anæsthesia they use eight different substances mixed with alcohol and applied locally. One of the substances is a Chinese plant which has the taste of



Apparatus for treating fracture of the ribs

cocaine and another is pepper; the rest of them are all leaves of certain plants which produce more or less numbness when tasted. They have six substances for producing general anæsthesia. They are administered by mouth and are used chiefly by the Chinese for extracting arrow heads, setting fractures, reducing dislocations, etc. The ingredients contained in them are partly the same as those for the local anæsthesia. These anæsthetic substances, both local and general, seem to be rather safe, as no bad effects or deaths have been recorded.

Surgical Dressings and Appliances.—Operations are very seldom performed, except the extraction of foreign substances from the body, scraping of necrotic bones and puncturing of abscesses. Abdominal opera-

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tion so far has not been recorded as having been performed by Chinese methods, though trephining of the skull has been done several times.

As in medicine, they have the same curious non-scientific classification of surgical diseases—the "Hot" and "Cold" system. For example, an abscess, when rapidly formed and at the stage toward suppuration, with all the signs of inflammation—as redness, swelling, heat and pain—is called the "Hot Abscess." In such a case cold lotions and soothing ointment have to be applied. Cooling drugs, such as diuretics, also are to be administered internally. When an abscess is slowly formed with no tendency towards suppuration and is suffered by a weak person, and shows only moderate signs of inflammation, it is called the "Cold Abscess." For such cases, hot poultices, or other warm applications are generally applied, or cauterization, or cupping, is used. Bread, rice and linseed are generally used as poultices. Preparations of mercury and borax are often used as ointments and lotions.

Alcohol, menthol, and lead are employed as evaporating lotions and often applied for pains and swelling due to inflammation.

Drainage tubes in the form of feather quills, decalcified bones, or bamboo sticks are sometimes used. They are employed for deep-seated abscesses or wounds. Bandages and splints are often applied especially in cases of fracture and dislocations of bones. There are no such instruments as catheters used for retention of urine. In such cases, they always depend on warm sitz baths and internal remedies.

Cauterization is by far the most frequently employed. It is not only used for arresting hæmorrhage, destroying growths and cutting tissues, but it is supposed to cure innumerable kinds of diseases by being applied to certain points of the body which will be described later on.

Venesection has sometimes been performed for cases of extremely plethoric subjects. It is done by cutting any vein of the body with a small pointed scalpel. The veins most frequently chosen are those of the fingers as this region is considered to be the least dangerous.

Torniquets for arresting hæmorrhage have at times been used, but bleeding is almost always stopped by tamponing the wound, by direct digital pressure, or in severe cases, by cautery. Ligatures have been used for dividing minor growths, such as warts, pile, etc., but never used for tying bleeding vessels.

Amputations are sometimes performed. These are usually employed for gangrene or necrosis of bones of the extremities. The operation is performed with a big knife and the part is chopped through with much force. Cauterization is the method used for arresting the hæmorrhage, therefore, the stump generally presents a very ugly appearance and often the wound is never healed up.

Thus far, I have given you a general idea about Chinese surgery; it

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Fig 2
Splint in position for fracture of patela



Fig 3
a kind of splint for fracture or dislocation of the Patela



Fig. 4
Splint applied in fracture of radius

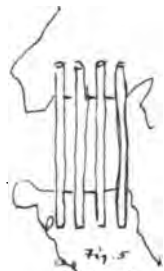

Fig. 5
a form of splint

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Fig. 6
a form of splint which can be cut to size as desired



Fig. 7
Splint in position for fracture of spinal column
back view



Fig 8
Front view



Fig. 9
Splint in position for Curvature of spine

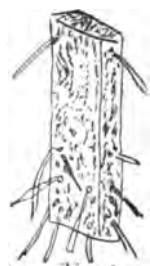

Fig. 10
splint for Curvature of spine

will now be interesting to know how a surgical disease is diagnosed and how each particular case is treated.

How a Surgical Case is Diagnosed.—The following rules were laid down by an eminent surgeon to the Chinese Emperor about 250 years ago:

1. Inspection. 2. The voice. 3. Questions on patient's condition and previous history. 4. The pulse.

1. Inspections are made as follows:

(A.) Appearance of the face: 1. The forehead represents the heart and when the heart is diseased the face presents a reddish or flushing color, e. g., acute endocarditis. 2. The nose represents the spleen and when the spleen is diseased the face presents a yellowish color, e. g., malarial cachexia. 3. The left cheek represents the liver and presents,

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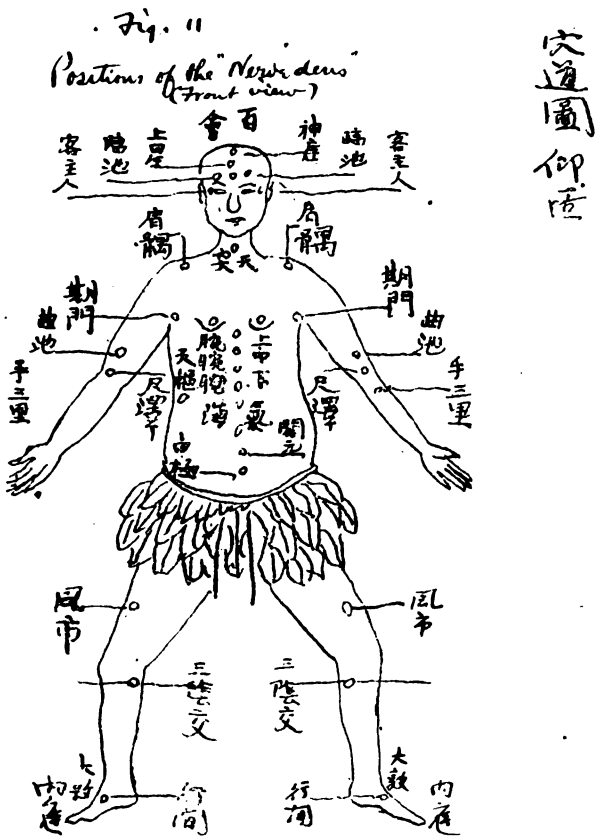
when the liver is diseased, a greenish color, e. g., jaundice. 4. The right cheek represents the lungs, and the face is colorless or very pale when the lungs are diseased, e. g., tuberculosis of the lungs.

(B.) Appearance of the tongue: 1. When the disease is "Cold" the tongue is pale, moist and thinly furred. 2. When the disease is "Hot" the tongue is red, dry and thickly furred. 3. When the patient is dying, the tongue is dry and covered with a thick darkish yellow fur. 4. Appearance of diseased part, for example, abscess on the back. The



abscess is said to be "Hot" when the cardinal signs of inflammation are present and "Cold" when not.

2. The Voice. Find out if the voice is abnormal, e. g., phthisis produces a weak voice, sore throat a harsh voice, and insanity an incoherent speech.

3. Questions on patient's condition and previous history:

A. Ask if the patient has any fever or shivering; if he has any excessive perspiration; any headache; any appetite; movement of bowels,

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pain in chest or abdomen; defect of hearing; sore throat, etc. B. Inquire of the patient about his previous illness, about the cause and symptoms. C. In women, find out if the menstruation is regular. D. In children, ask if the child has or has not previously suffered from smallpox, chicken-pox or measles. The Chinese doctors believe that every person is sure to suffer every one of these three diseases during the life time. This explains the reason why children are often intentionally exposed to persons suffering from these diseases. They believe that children bear these diseases better and with less danger.

4. The Pulse.—The pulse is always felt in both medical and surgical diseases, as they say, to ascertain whether the disease is "Hot" or "Cold." The wrist is always the part chosen for the purpose. They claim that the rate and volume is different in healthy persons during the different seasons. In spring the pulse should be full, in summer large, in autumn thready and in winter hard.

I will now mention some special diseases and describe how these different diseases are treated according to the Chinese method.

1. Bites of rabid dogs—Hydrophobia. The patient should at once be brought to a quiet place, where the wound is to be washed at once with cold tea or any other lotion, and then cauterized with hot iron. Then search the head immediately for two or three red hairs which are to be pulled out. The juice of "Ki Choy" (a kind of plant) is to be given internally per mouth; this juice is to be repeated every seven days for seven times. Patient should for one year avoid eating pork and fish, alcohol drinking and sexual intercourse, and not to take dog meat during the life time. Application of the juice of the leaves of evergreen is also advised.

2. Bites by horse are treated by asking the patient to chew a piece of pork with rice and then apply it to the wound. It stops the pain at once and healing takes place quickly.

3. Bites by poisonous snakes. Cut open an old smoking bamboo pipe; wash out the inner surface of the pipe with cold water, and allow the patient to drink it. If the snake is poisonous, the patient will not feel the pungent taste of the nicotin. The same stuff is to be applied locally. This treatment is recorded to have been tried with success many times. Another method is to rub two knives together in water and drink it. Applying to the wound the juice of a plant called "Lun Wong Kek" is said to be very effective. When the snake is coiled round the body of a person, with no tendency to loosen, the patient is advised to roll round on the ground when the snake will feel tired and loosen itself.

4. Burns and scalds. Honey with boiled water, or warm sugar water, or child's urine is to be given per mouth immediately. Peanut oil shaken with lime water applied to burned surface. The burned surface should

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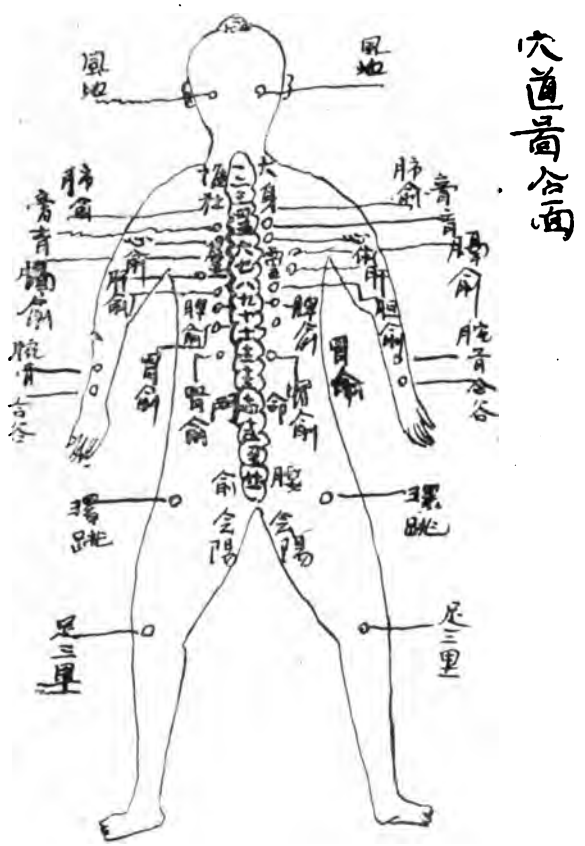
never be washed or soaked in cold water, as is often done. Human milk with salt has also been used.

5. Hæmorrhage from cut wounds. Slice a piece of lean meat and apply to the cut surface; hæmorrhage is at once stopped. Apply to the wound burned paper. Tampon the wound with tobacco, or cauterize with hot iron.

Fig. 12
Positions of the "nerve den,
(Back view)



6. Concussion and compression of brain with hæmorrhage from mouth and ears, and patient in an insensible state resulting from blows or falls. Keep the patient perfectly quiet in a dark room and avoid all visitors. Allow the patient to sit down with arms and legs folded. Give at once per mouth boy's urine, or warm water with sugar and alcohol.

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Apply to the head or wounded surface warm soil dug up three feet below the surface of the earth.

7. Prolapse of intestine from stab wound. Wash the wound and prolapsed part with boiled vinegar; the intestine will spontaneously slip back. Apply to the wound skin of newly killed chicken.

8. Foreign bodies.—A. Needle in palm. If it is impossible to extract it, give the patient internally ash of burned feather of hawk mixed with alcohol. Apply to the wound a mixture of finely ground porcelain powder and olive oil, or ham skin; the needle will slip out gradually like magic. B. Shots or shells in flesh. Apply to the wound fish stomach ground together with starch; the shell will find its way out. C. Fish bones in throat. Give the patient saliva of dog obtained by hanging the dog up-side down (dog's saliva is used because dogs are skillful in digesting bones); or give the patient powdered bone of tiger. Powdered liver of fish when used will melt the bone.

We now come to fractures and dislocations of which the Chinese from experience know something.

Fracture. The following symptoms are described in a Chinese book on surgery:

1. Abnormal mobility. 2. Deformity. 3. Crepitus felt on manipulation. 4. Swelling and ecchymosis, pain and tenderness.

The following methods are advised to reduce a fracture:

1. Manipulation and traction. 2. Extension by pulleys in difficult cases.

To diagnose a case of fracture from dislocation:

1. Dislocation has no crepitus. 2. Dislocation has rigidity while fracture has abnormal mobility. 3. The deformity in dislocation when reduced has no tendency to recur.

Treatment.—Treat the swelling and bruise with evaporating lotions. Reduce the fracture by manipulation, traction, or counter extension. Give local anæsthetic to stop the pain, and general anæsthetic in case the fracture is difficult to reduce. Apply splint to the fractured part. (See figures 1 to 10.)

Now, there is another method of treatment termed by the Chinese "the spiritual medicinal cauterization treatment." This treatment is believed to be omnipotent. It cures as if by magic nearly all the surgical and medical cases, especially neuralgic diseases. The whole body, head, neck, trunk and extremities are believed to be represented by many points, or as they are called "nerve dens" (see fig. 11). Each "nerve den" represents the cause of certain diseases. For example, the center of the forehead is supposed to be responsible for such troubles as coryza or influenza, therefore the person suffering from these diseases will recover at once by cauterizing that particular spot, or "nerve den." Or again, when a

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person suffers from pains in the stomach or heart, these troubles will therefore be cured by cauterizing the "nerve den" in the center of the epigastrium, which spot is believed to be responsible for such pains (see fig. 11).

This "medicinal cauterizer" is prepared by rolling in a paper 17 different kinds of Chinese medicines into a stick (some of these medicines are sulphur, cinammon, spice, deer's horn and cardamon). This stick is then burned and applied to the "nerve den."

The cauterizing of the "nerve den" may be applied either *Directly* or *Intermediately*. It is termed *Direct* when the "medicinal cauterizer" actually burns the part, and *Intermediate* when there is something interposing between the skin and the cauterizer. The material used for the interposition is either a bandage, a slice of ginger, or a piece of bread.

There are three kinds of the "spiritual medicinal cauterizer," viz: 1. The "medicinal cauterizer." To be applied *Directly* or *Intermediately* to the skin. 2. The "spice stick," To be applied directly to the skin. 3. The "medicinal needle." Used by puncturing the "nerve den" directly.

I have seen this treatment performed among the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Anamites, Filipinos and East Indians.

How to use the "medicinal cauterizer:" 1. Make the diagnosis: Find out which "nerve den" is responsible for the trouble. Mark the spot with ink, and bandage that part with seven layers of red calico. 2. Light the "medicinal cauterizer" and apply it to the bandaged part until the patient feels hot on that part, then stop the treatment for a while, and apply again for at least seven times, or no more than 49 times. 3. The day must be fine and the room airy when the treatment is to be employed. 4. After the treatment, the patient must keep in bed for a while, and good wine must be given for helping the action of the medicine.

Surgery among the Chinese is after all empirical, superstitious, and not at all scientific, but, as I said before, the waves are turning, and old rags are being gradually replaced by new clothes. It will not be long before you will find China one of the centers for scientific research.

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