

BURNS AND SCALDS.

To treat injuries of this sort might well pass under the head of surgery, and therefore I might omit all allusion thereto. It may, however, not be thought improper for me to say a few words with reference to the best method of treating them, because, after the hygienic idea of what disease is, these injuries may be called diseases.

The human skin is, on the whole, as important an organ as any of the human body; and while it can, perhaps, perform its functions to such degree as will enable the body to retain general vital relations to its uses and offices, though the skin be diseased, better than any other organ in the body can do, nevertheless there is a point beyond which the skin itself cannot be injured and made to take on unhealthy conditions, and yet be able to perform its functions. Burns or scalds, whether made by the heat of fire or by heated fluids, are dangerous only as they are extensive. If they are local, nature takes care of the difficulty by the healing process which immediately begins after the scald or burn is received; but if large portions of the skin are destroyed, then the system becomes so deranged, both in respect to the circulation of the blood as well as to the irritation of the nervous system, as to render restoration doubtful if not impossible.

In the way of treating local burns or scalds, the treatment is to keep the part from the air. Anything which will do this may, in itself, serve a remedial purpose. Thus any poultice or plaster made of flour or any substance which can be spread on the burned part, and not inflame it by irritating the raw flesh, serves a temporary purpose. It becomes, in a measure, to the part injured, an artificial skin.

I have never had but one serious scald or burn to deal with, and that I treated by immersing the entire part in water, keeping it there hour by hour for days, taking it out only when I felt that it was prudent to do so, either because of the desire of the patient to have it done, or because of the necessity of change of posture to the patient; but, as soon as I could, placing the part back in water and covering it all up by it. It proved to be a most successful way of treating the injury, and enabled the sufferer to sustain the pain better than in any other way of which I could conceive.

When burns or scalds occur, water dressings are therefore of great value, provided the applications be of substances which are soft and delicate in their texture. Wet these in water, and apply to the injured part, and keep them wet all the while. Nature will produce healing quicker in burns and scalds, as in all kinds of wounds, under the application of water, than of any other substance which I know.

How to Treat the Sick without Medicine by Dr. Caleb Jackson, pages 511-516