

THE LANCET

LONDON: SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 1880

THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS OF LIGHTNING UPON CANCER

To the Editor of THE LANCET

SIR, -As I am not aware that the records of the healing art furnish any case of cancer having yielded to the influence of lightning, I venture to draw the attention of the numerous readers of THE LANCET to the following remarkable case, which may awaken due interest in the curative value of electricity in diseases of a malignant type. Many years ago I heard the late Dr. Golding Bird express an opinion to the effect that electrical sparks drawn from a cancerous structure until an eruption is produced was the only reliable means of cure which he could endorse. In confirmation of the theory of the celebrated electrician, I beg to submit an extraordinary instance of the therapeutic freaks of atmospherical electricity in the cure of cancer. The case loses none of its interest on the plea of antiquity.

About thirty years ago, I attended Reuben S---, a farm labourer, residing at Langtoft, on the Yorkshire Wolds, who suffered from cancer of the inferior lip and part of the chin for about a year, and who had agreed to an operation for their removal. In the meantime he undertook to assist a poor farmer for a day in ploughing his land. During this Occupation he was struck down by lightning, and carried home in a state of insensibility. Both of his horses were killed, and the wooden beam of the plough was split and reduced to considerable fragments. Soon after the occurrence I visited, and found the ploughman in a state of great prostration, and emitting a strong odour of ozone, indicating electrical condensation of the adherent oxygen.

As soon as reaction took place I bled him from the arm, which act constituted the whole of the treatment. What seems to be the most astonishing feature in the case is the healing process which was set up in the lip and chin soon after the accident. The cancer gradually lessened, and in a few weeks every trace of the diseased structure disappeared, and for ten years he enjoyed complete freedom from his former suffering and signs of the disease. In proof of the specific and hereditary character of the disorder, I may state that the patient's granddaughter, Mrs. P-, of Driffield, lately became the subject of a cancerous tumour over the larynx, which growth, assisted by Dr. Rames, I removed successfully a few weeks ago, and under the persistent use of arsenical treatment the cure seems to be satisfactory. In S-'s case the electrical fluid seemed to form and pass through two small holes in the head-band of his trousers, and to make its exit by corresponding apertures.

After this remarkable exemption from all cancerous development for so long a period, the disease reappeared, and, after a year of intense suffering, proved fatal ; still leaving the inference unaffected, that the imponderable element

secured for the patient an extension of life, and ten years' relief from the distressing consequences of carcinoma, which circumstance establishes my faith in the therapeutic power of electricity in scirrhus indurations. From the foregoing representation, it is evident that frictional electricity may in good hands become one of the most powerful therapeutic agents in the dispersion of cancerous formations.

When cellular hypertrophy takes place in localities favourable to the development of epithelial disease, frictional electricity might be employed for the purpose of destroying the morbid cells, whether in their incipient or advanced stages of progression. The authorities of the London Cancer Hospital will be unfaithful to their honourable trust should they decline to test to the fullest extent the curative effects of frictional electricity in some of the most hopeless variety of diseases to which humanity is exposed. I shall not venture upon any theory of the specific action of electricity on morbid depositions but consign the whole question to the abler readers of your incomparable journal.

**I remain, Sir, yours &c.,
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Senior Surgeon to the Lloyd Cottage Hospital,
Bridlington.**