

## CHAP. XIX.

## OF ESCHAROTICS.

ESCHAROTICS are substances which erode or dissolve the animal solids. They produce erosion or ulceration, either by directly combining with the animal matter, and forming a soft pulp, or a species of eschar: Or they sometimes appear to act by a resulting affinity, causing the elements of the soft solids to enter into new combinations, whence their cohesion is subverted, and their composition changed. In both cases the life of the part is destroyed. They are employed principally to remove excrescences, to establish an ulcer, or to change the surface of an ulcerated part, converting it into a simple sore. The action of all of them is purely chemical.

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 ESCHAROTICS.
 

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ACIDA MINERALIA.

SUPER-SULPHAS ALUMINÆ ET POTASSÆ.

POTASSA.

NITRAS ARGENTI.

MURIAS ANTIMONII.

SULPHAS CUPRI.

ACETAS CUPRI.

MURIAS HYDRARGYRI.

SUB-NITRAS HYDRARGYRI.

OXIDUM ARSENICI ALBUM.

JUNIPERUS SABINA.

THE MINERAL ACIDS act rapidly as escharotics, especially the sulphuric and nitric acid; but from their fluidity they can seldom be conveniently applied.

SUPER-SULPHAS ALUMINÆ ET POTASSÆ. Alumen. Alum.

ALUM, from its excess of acid, has a degree of escharotic power; and under the form of dried alum, in which its water of crystallization is expelled, is sometimes used in fine powder to check the growth of fungous excrescences from ulcers. This powder, rubbed with a

little sugar, is, from the same property, applied to remove opaque specks from the cornea.

POTASSA. Potash. (Page. 478.)

PURE potash, in its solid state, forms a powerful escharotic, which has long been in use under the name of *Causticum Commune Acerrimum*. When its solution, before being evaporated entirely to dryness, is mixed with a portion of lime, its operation is rendered rather weaker: this preparation is named *Causticum Commune Mitius*. Either of them is made into a paste with soap, and applied to the part. This application is frequently employed to establish an ulcer, and sometimes in preference to incision to open a tumor: it is attended with a considerable degree of pain, and a sense of burning heat; after it is removed, a cataplasm is applied, by which this is relieved, and suppuration established. Mr Simmons has recommended potash in preference to other escharotics, to prevent the effects from the bite of a rabid animal; it is applied freely to the bitten part; and the preventive operation of excision, he has supposed, may be rendered more certain by touching the surface with potash.

NITRAS ARGENTI. Nitrate of Silver. *Causticum Lunare*. Lunar Caustic.

THIS preparation is obtained by dissolving silver in nitric acid, evaporating the solution to dryness, melting the mass by a gentle heat, and while liquid running it into cylindrical moulds, in which, as it cools, it becomes con-

crete. It is the caustic which is in most common use for checking the growth of fungous excrescences, or changing the diseased surface of an ulcer, a little of it being dissolved in as small a portion of water as is sufficient, and applied by a pencil to the part.

MURIAS ANTIMONII. Muriate of Antimony., (Page 326).

THIS preparation of antimony has been used as an escharotic, but being liquid it is not easily confined to the part on which it is designed to act, and it has no particular advantage to recommend it.

SULPHAS CUPRI. Sulphate of Copper. Vitriolum Cæruleum. Blue Vitriol.

THIS salt is a mild escharotic, and from this mildness of its operation is adapted to particular cases. Its solution in water is sometimes employed to change the diseased surface of sores, especially of venereal sores, and either in solution, or in powder mixed with any mild vegetable powder, it is applied to remove specks on the cornea.

SUB-ACETAS CUPRI. Sub-acetate of Copper. Ærugo Æris. Verdigrease.

THIS preparation is formed by stratifying plates of copper with the husks of the grape. These suffer a slow fermentation, whence vinegar is formed; and this acting on the copper, forms a green oxide, with which a portion of the acid likewise combines, so as to form a sub-acetate. It is in frequent use as an escharotic, principally to

change the surface of foul ulcers, being applied under the form of ointment mixed with lard. In the same form, it is applied as a stimulant in some kinds of ophthalmia.

*Offic. Prep.*—Ungt. Sub-acet. Cupr. *Ph. Ed. Dub.*—  
Oxymel *Æruginis. Dub. Lond.*

MURIAS HYDRARGYRI CORROSIVUS. Corrosive Muriate of Mercury.

THIS preparation of mercury is occasionally employed as an escharotic. Its solution in water, in the proportion of one grain to the ounce, is in particular applied to venereal ulcers. And still more dilute, it is sometimes used as a lotion to herpetic eruptions.

SUB-NITRAS HYDRARGYRI. Sub-nitrate of Mercury.

THIS is in common use as an escharotic, and as a stimulant application to foul and languid ulcers. Reduced to fine powder, it is sprinkled on the part, or it is applied mixed with lard in the form of ointment; for the preparation of which, a formula is given in the Pharmacopœias.

*Offic. Prep.*—Ungt. Sub-nitr. Hydrargyr. *Ph. Dub. Lond. Ed.*

OXIDUM ARSENICI ALBUM. Oxide of Arsenic. (P. 231.)

WHITE oxide of arsenic has been frequently employed as an external application to cancer, and though it has been regarded as in some measure specific, its immediate action is that of an escharotic. It was first introduced as an empirical remedy, and was applied, mixed with several vegetable powders, and made into a paste with the

yolk of an egg : this, in a few hours, formed an eschar, by which the diseased surface was changed; and by exciting suppuration by the application of cataplasms, this was thrown off. It has since been used under the form of ointment or solution. The latter has been supposed the least painful form, though perhaps it is not the most effectual. Ten grains are dissolved in one ounce of water, and this solution is applied by a pencil to the sore. It not unfrequently amends the discharge, causes the sore to contract in size, and cases have even been related of its having effected a cure. Violent lancinating pain is sometimes produced by its application; and in some cases, from its continuance, the general system appears to be affected; a symptomatic cough being induced, which cannot be relieved but by suspending the application, and when this does come on, the use of the arsenic ought to be stopt. It requires, therefore, to be used with caution.

JUNIPERUS SABINA. Savine. (See p. 373.)

THE leaves of savine possess an acrid power, whence they are employed as escharotic. The powder sprinkled on warts or excrescences removes them; or made into an ointment with lard, is used as an application to old ulcers, and to some obstinate cutaneous affections: it has also been recommended as superior to any other stimulating application in exciting that degree of suppuration, necessary to keep up a discharge from an issue.

*Offic. Prep*—Cerat. Sabinæ, *Ph. Lond. Dub.*—Ol. Sabinæ, *Ph. Ed. Dub.*