A CASE OF PERFORATION OF A GASTRIC ULCER DUE TO AN ACCIDENT.

By Captain Kenneth Black.
Royal Army Medical Corps.

Mr. C., an accountant, aged 41, had been troubled with wind and slight attacks of indigestion for several years. In August these attacks became more marked and were accompanied with vomiting. He therefore took a holiday and indulged in fresh air and golf. On September 12 he had his usual hearty lunch at 1.15 p.m., and then started a game of golf. At the second hole he made an unusual effort to obtain a long drive and immediately was doubled up with pain and collapsed. This occurred at 2.15 p.m. He was not sick and did not feel sick. He was taken to his hotel, and I saw him at about 6.45 p.m. The heart-rate varied, and would be 66 one moment and two or three minutes later it would be 100. There was pain, tenderness and rigidity in the hypogastric and right epigastric regions; the liver dullness was diminished; temperature, 98.8° F. There had been no vomiting. A perforated gastric ulcer was diagnosed and the patient removed to the hospital, where I performed an operation the same evening. On the anterior surface of the stomach at the pylorus I found an old ulcer with a medium-sized perforation, through which a good deal of stomach contents had escaped. The perforation was closed and some omentum stitched over the ulcer; the abdominal cavity was rapidly mopped clean and the abdomen closed. The patient had some vomiting for the first thirty hours after the operation, otherwise he made an uninterrupted recovery.

The interest of this case lies in the fact that it would appear that the immediate cause of the perforation was a sudden strain or "accident." Any disease or illness that is brought about by an accident is of great importance for the purposes of the Workman's Compensation Act. In this case had the patient been a working man or woman, and had the strain occurred whilst he or she was at his or her employment, it seems probable that it would have been held that there had been an accident which had arisen out of and in the course of his or her employment, and the patient would have been paid compensation during the time of incapacity, or, in the case of death, compensation would have been paid to the relatives. If an ulcer became perforated at the time of a strain, it would be assumed to have been caused by the strain, as the following classic case illustrates. A workman had a large thoracic aneurysm, and whilst at his work the aneurysm suddenly gave way and the man expired. In this case it was held that the workman must have had a strain or "accident" to cause the aneurysm to burst, and as the "accident" arose out of and in the course of the man's employment, his relatives received compensation.