

Medical Matters.

LUNG SURGERY.



For some years the operation of opening and draining cavities in the lung, especially if they be single and fairly superficial, has been growing in professional favour; and there are many cases now on record in which excellent results have been attained by this method of treatment. Wherever there is much purulent expectoration the treatment is practically the same as would be adopted in the case of an abscess in any other part of the body, and is, therefore, surgically sound. In fact, in cases of pulmonary abscess, or gangrene or hydatid cysts, such treatment is the only possible means of cure for the patients. With regard to the after-treatment of the wound, however, considerable difference of method exists amongst different operators. It is customary, however, now to drain a cavity so opened by means of strips of iodoform gauze. At any rate, with the results so far attained, there is no doubt that the surgery of the lung is on the threshold of further and greater triumphs than ten years ago would have been considered possible.

THE EFFECTS OF BLEEDING.

Experiments have recently been made as to the precise effect of bleeding upon rabbits, continued until the blood pressure became so low that the flow ceased. When this stage arrived, the animal was invariably in a state of marked asphyxia. In some cases, transfusion of fluid was then performed equal in amount to that removed, with the result that the animal commenced to breathe and quickly recovered power. The conclusions at which the experimenters arrived were that severe bleeding does not affect the respiratory exchange, providing that the nutrition of the animal is not affected by the loss. The result of the experiments therefore show that the transfusion of fluid in cases of prolonged bleeding, and the usefulness of which we have commented upon previously in these columns, attains its beneficial results by its mechanical effect in filling the depleted blood vessels.

SCARLET FEVER IN PREGNANCY.

This is well known to be so dangerous a sequence or accompaniment of the puerperal state, that it is well to remember that a form of erythema, or redness of the skin, is known to occur in some women before or after delivery. The points of distinction between this and true scarlet fever are that there is no fever with the former, although in the latter di-

sease it is invariable, and that there are none of the throat symptoms or subsequent peeling of the skin which are such almost invariable accompaniments of scarlet fever. And the result of the case, moreover, tends to clear up the diagnosis, because while the erythema is quite harmless the mortality and danger of puerperal scarlatina is very great. The redness in these cases is most marked on the lower extremities, and as a measure of precaution it is suggested that they should be washed daily with a solution of sublimate of mercury, or other powerful antiseptic fluid.

LIKE CURES LIKE.

A very curious result, which opens up a field of considerable interest and importance for future investigators, has been obtained by an Italian physiologist, who appears to have proved that human beings who are habituated to the effects of strychnine, may be thereby afforded immunity form the effects of the poison of tetanus. He commenced his experiments in view of the well-known facts that Styrian peasants can take large doses of arsenic without any effect, it having been the custom of their ancestors for generations to take large doses of this drug, and that, therefore, in their case the immunity would seem to be hereditary; and, secondly, that the results of a poisonous dose of strychnia are very similar to the conditions of tetanus. Whether the argument is well founded or not, there seems to have been no doubt as to the result of the experiment, because animals, which had been dosed with strychnia until they developed a fair amount of tolerance to the effects of the drug, exhibited no evidence of the tetanic poison when it was injected under their skin.

THE PHONOGRAPH IN MEDICINE.

From a recent demonstration which was given in Glasgow, it seems probable that the newest electrical instruments, the phonograph and the microphone, will shortly be pressed into the service of the clinical teacher. By means of the former instrument a number of cough sounds and varieties of hoarseness were excellently demonstrated to a large audience, while steps have been taken even to register the sounds of the heart. The advantage of these appliances in teaching students in the class-room outside Hospital wards, and without inconvenience to the patient, are obviously great, and it seems possible that within the near future a class of students will be able to hear all together the sounds of the cardiac movements of a patient comfortably reclining in bed in a Hospital a mile or more away. If this be so, clinical teaching will be immensely simplified, and certainly no small number of patients will henceforth arise and call Mr. Edison blessed.

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