

## Medical Matters.

### A NEW PHYSICAL SIGN.



The diagnosis of aneurism of the aorta, especially in its earliest stages, or if the dilatation has taken place near the arch of the artery, or between the arch and the aortic valves, is often most difficult. At the same time, inasmuch as these cases, if allowed to progress, are inevitably fatal, it is all important that the condition should be discovered as soon as possible. A new physical sign, therefore, to which an American physician has called attention, may prove to be of great importance and value in the diagnosis of these cases at an early stage. It is stated that whenever there is aortic regurgitation, or aortic dilatation, a systolic sound can be heard in the brachial artery occurring together with the first sound of the heart, and sometimes accompanied by a distinct murmur in the artery. When this sound is heard, and, by other signs, aortic regurgitation can be excluded, it is asserted that aneurism is certainly present. Indeed, it would appear that even in cases in which the aneurism affected the abdominal aorta, the murmur was heard distinctly in the brachial artery. Reasoning from analogy, one would expect that in the latter case this arterial sound would be more certainly heard in the femoral artery than in the brachial, as being so much nearer to the affected point. The explanation of the sound which is given is, we imagine, hardly the correct one, for experience would lead one to believe that it is probably caused by the conduction of the murmur caused by the regurgitation through the aortic valves of the heart, or by the passage of the blood through the dilated sac of the artery. We commend the fact to the notice of our medical readers, as, if it proves to be invariably present in these cases, it will undoubtedly be a most valuable aid in the diagnosis of this important disease.

### DIPHTHERIA ANTITOXIN.

Evidence is rapidly accumulating, of the strongest kind, proving the beneficial results of the treatment of diphtheria by antitoxin, to which allusion has already been made in these columns. In a case just recorded, the patient, a girl, aged 11 years, was found, on October 21st, to be suffering from marked diphtheritic patches on the tonsils. The next day, the false membrane had considerably extended, and the patient's condition was markedly worse. Nearly three-quarters of an ounce of antitoxin serum was injected in the right flank, causing no uneasiness beyond the prick of the needle.

The patient immediately began to improve, profuse perspirations occurred, the temperature fell to normal, the false membrane "melted away" within twenty-four hours, and the patient rapidly recovered. The case is instructive as an illustration of similar results which have been obtained by means of this treatment by many other practitioners, and it is now generally believed that in this new discovery we possess a reliable antidote and cure for one of the most dreaded and fatal diseases.

### KIDNEY DISEASE.

The case of the late Tsar of Russia has once more emphasized the fact which is so well known to medical men, but which appears so extraordinary to the laity, and from time to time elicits expressions of surprise in the lay Press, that this disease is so insidious in its nature that it may exist for some length of time before its presence is suspected. It is stated, apparently on good authority, that it was only quite recently, and indeed almost by accident, that the fact, that the Tsar was suffering from disease of the kidneys, was discovered; and it is quite certain, considering the progress of the case, and the condition which was found *post mortem*, that the degeneration of the kidney substance had been progressing for some length of time. We have it on excellent authority that the late Tsar was possessed, until lately, of an enormous appetite, and however much nourishment his Herculean frame required for its sustenance, it is a physiological fact that people who take too large an amount of animal food are very liable to disease in those organs which have to excrete the consequent products. In former days, this fact was proved by the extreme frequency with which gout occurred among those classes who ate too much and took too little walking exercise. To-day, when acute gout seems to be growing less frequent, such people suffer from the granular disease of the kidneys which was formerly so frequently found associated with gouty attacks. An amusing article appeared last week in a journal devoted to popular medicine, advising medical men always to be on the watch for renal disease, as if all experienced practitioners were not thoroughly well aware of such a necessary precaution. Probably, if the truth were told, the delayed diagnosis in the case of the Tsar was due rather to the fact that, from his temperament as well as from his position, he was a most difficult patient to treat. His doctor appears to have incurred a considerable amount of odium in Russia—and, we cannot but think, most unjustly, because it is easy to imagine that he was considerably hampered by the peculiarities of his patient, both in making a diagnosis and in carrying out the necessary treatment.

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