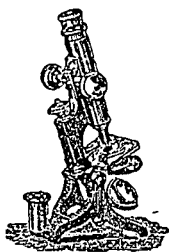


Medical Matters.

THE REVOLUTION IN MILITARY SURGERY.



It is generally recognised by military surgeons that, in future wars, field-surgery will have to deal with very different conditions from those which have been in force in previous conflicts in consequence not only of the greater range of the new projectiles, but also because of the difference in the wounds produced by the present forms of Infantry rifle. In a general way, it may be said that while the old-fashioned gun caused tearing and shattering of the tissues, the new one has an effect chiefly piercing; that the old bullet created more shock and, therefore, stopped a wounded man more effectually. Taking it for granted then that, in future fighting, most of the wounds will occur at the perforating, and not at the shattering, distance, that is to say, between 350 and 800 yards, the wounds will be smaller and less lacerated; the missiles will go through the body and shock will be less; the bullet, being smaller, will have less tendency to carry with it patches of clothing; where there is actually some chipping of a joint surface, it will be possible, under antiseptic conditions, to open up the joint at once, to pick out the fragments, to sterilize the cavity, and to close it up, thus avoiding what was formerly a very fruitful cause of amputation—a large number of amputations and excisions, which were formerly necessary, will be saved in future; in perforating wounds of the chest or abdomen, the damage done, and the subsequent result, will be less severe than was formerly the case. From this, it follows that immediate antisepticism of the wounds will be so important that the bearers will be often required to effect this before bringing in the patient to the field-hospital. The dispersion of the wounded over wide areas will, however, increase the difficulty of prompt "first aid," and will, therefore, tend to increase the first mortality. Finally, there can be no doubt that just as field surgery is now more scientific than it was, so it will require much better appliances both in hospitals, in trained nursing, and in instruments, than used to be considered at all necessary.

CHLORAL FOR HÆMOPTYSIS.

A writer in this month's number of a German contemporary calls attention to two very old-fashioned remedies for this symptom, the ligaturing of the limbs as recommended by Hippocrates, and general bleeding. The object, of course, of both these procedures is to relieve the venous circulation, while permitting the arterial flow. The author has, by applying ligatures firmly round both arms and both thighs, succeeded in checking dangerous

attacks of hæmorrhage from the lungs. But there seems to be a grave danger, if not a certainty, of the recurrence of the hæmorrhage as soon as the ligatures are removed from the limbs, and it would certainly, in ordinary cases, be impossible to maintain these in position for much more than half an hour. Bleeding, on the other hand, has been known to cause more harm than good in these cases, by the alarm which the operation causes to patients whose nervous systems are already unstrung by the loss of blood from the lungs. In view of these facts, the author of the paper in question recommends the employment of chloral hydrate in hæmoptysis, in order to control the vascular tension. He employed this drug, giving it by the rectum in a considerable number of cases, in doses of from 15 to 25 grains, and a rapid effect was in every case produced upon the hæmorrhage. In other cases, the author found that the administration of the drug appeared to prevent an attack of hæmoptysis. The theory of the employment of this drug is, of course, quite physiological, and it will doubtless receive an extended and careful trial in such cases in this country.

PYOKTANIN.

This drug has, within the last few months, been very extensively used in the treatment of cancerous growths both in this country and abroad, and a German physician has recently reported some striking cases which would seem to show that it can be employed with marked results. He states that in three cases of advanced cancer of the stomach, in which he employed the drug, the patients exhibited a striking improvement—the sickness and pain disappeared, appetite and sleep returned, and the general strength and body weight increased. We greatly regret that we do not regard these cases as at all conclusive. We have employed the drug in cases of malignant disease, and while a distinct improvement undoubtedly has taken place in the general health, no change whatever has been affected, nor, indeed, has any cessation of growth been noticed, in the local disease. If it does good at all, however, the drug will prove to be very valuable, but false hopes should not be founded upon its presumed effect as a curative agent.

MASSAGE FOR CONVULSIONS.

A German surgeon reports that he has found much benefit given by massage of the abdomen in cases of convulsions in children. This, we imagine, could only arise in cases in which the nerve irritation was due to some abdominal cause; and, indeed, the main effect in the writer's cases appears to have been that the massage acted as a passive aperient. Certainly the treatment could do no good if the convulsions were due to reflex irritation, say, from a burn of the skin, or from the pressure of a new tooth.

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