

Medical Matters.

RUPTURE OF THE HEART.



A "broken heart" is rarely met with except in the imagination of the novelist. But rupture does occur sometimes, and spontaneously; and an interesting case of this condition has recently been recorded in a French contemporary. The patient was a woman 75 years old, who had been in a lunatic Asylum for twelve years, during the last five of which she had become extremely obese. The heart sounds were noticed to be very feeble, and the patient suffered from extreme cold. One morning, when apparently in her ordinary health, she raised herself in bed and suddenly threw up her arms, screamed, and fell back dead. A *post-mortem* examination showed that the heart was extremely fatty, and that there was a tear through the substance of the right auricle, through which a quantity of blood had escaped, filling the pericardium. It is more common for these cases to occur when the heart is affected by fatty degeneration, or when there is some thinning of the muscular wall; and there are a few cases on record in which a rupture has evidently occurred, but the patient recovered, subsequently, perhaps, dying from some other complaint. Then it has been found that a scar existed in the heart wall at the site of the old rupture, which Nature had managed to repair by closing the opening with blood, and then inflaming the pericardium so that it became adherent to the outer layer of the heart substance at the site of rupture, thus forming, so to speak, a firm buttress and outer support to the torn tissue. Still rupture of the heart is not only comparatively rare, but it is also, as a rule, almost immediately fatal.

TUBERCULAR PERITONITIS.

A VERY important paper upon this subject has recently been published in an Italian contemporary, especially with regard to the influence exerted upon the disease by opening the abdomen. It has been known, for some years past, that this mere operation alone, although it only may give exit to a small amount of serous fluid, often brings about a permanent cure; and considering the former

fatality of the disease, and indeed the almost invariable progress of tubercular disease from bad to worse, there has been considerable discussion as to the method by which an operation which does not seem to touch the disease itself can possibly be so successful in curing it. The author of the paper in question found by numerous experiments that from seven days to nearly a month after the operation the tubercular disease was actually greater in amount than before; but a quantity of reddish serum was thrown out. After a month, a rapid diminution, and finally the disappearance, of the tubercles was almost invariably observed. The author has arrived at the conclusion that the inflammatory serum which follows the operation, and thus bathes the tubercular growths, must be a powerful germicide, and therefore acts as a curative agent simply by poisoning the tubercle bacilli.

THE SERUM TREATMENT.

THE latest reports from America concerning the antitoxin treatment of diphtheria go to strengthen the growing favour which this treatment has gained. Out of a large number of cases treated in 1895, the mortality was only 14 per cent., as compared with a fatality of 35 per cent. in the previous year—when diphtheria had been of a markedly milder type than usual. Once more, statistics show the need of this treatment being adopted in an early stage, if it is to be thoroughly successful—the great majority of fatal cases occurring amongst those patients who did not apply for relief until the second or third week of the disease. It may be remembered that this fact was made very clear by the careful and comprehensive statistics published this year by the Metropolitan Asylums Board, and upon which we commented at some length at the time of their appearance. The material for injection is now obtainable with comparative ease, and of a definite strength. It is easily administered by a medical man, and therefore it is probable that, as the statistics proving its value increase in number, it will be more readily tried in the earliest stages of diphtheria; and then, as previous experience has shown, it will probably give even better results than hitherto, and thus will further encourage the medical profession to employ it more frequently and more early in the treatment of these cases.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)