

Medical Matters.

BULLETS IN THE SKULL.



UNTIL this year, it has been, of course, impossible, except in those rare cases in which a sinus remained in the track of a bullet, to correctly discover the precise position of foreign bodies embedded inside the skull. Recently, however, several cases have been reported both in Germany and France, in which, by means of the Röntgen Rays, the position of a bullet in the brain could be located; although, curiously enough, in each of these cases, it was so placed that it was impossible to reach it without fatal injury to the brain. The practical advantage, therefore, of the X rays in these cases is that not only do they show the position of the missile, but they also prove at once whether or not an operation for its removal could be safely carried out, and the exact place on the skull at which the necessary opening must be made. In former days, this latter and most important fact was necessarily more or less a matter of guesswork, and then when an operation had been decided upon, as a last resource, it was sometimes found impossible to discover the foreign body. In a case recently reported in a French contemporary, it was found necessary to expose the patient's head for an hour and three quarters, to the rays, in order to get a sufficiently clear photograph. It is possible, however, that, by means of the improvements which are constantly being made in the fluorescent screen, the power of seeing through bony structures which is already considerable, will be so far increased that only a brief exposure to the rays will be necessary in order that the surgeon may be able to distinguish the exact site of any foreign body in any part of the human frame.

NAILING AN ARTERY.

ONE of the greatest difficulties met with in operations upon bones has hitherto been the bleeding from an artery which has been severed, especially if it were situated in spongy bone tissue. The best method of checking such hæmorrhage has usually been either by prolonged pressure upon the bleeding point, or by the application of the cautery to it. But a Swiss surgeon has overcome this difficulty in a novel, and evidently in a practical manner. He inserts a nail into the bleeding

part of the bone, and hammers it in, the nail having been previously completely antisepticised. At the end of the operation, he advises that the nail should be removed, and that in most instances it will then be found that the bleeding has stopped; but if hæmorrhage persists, the nail can be left in, and fresh tissue forms around it, embedding it as it were in new bone. The method is scientifically correct, always assuming that the nail is absolutely aseptic.

ADDISON'S DISEASE.

THIS is the name given to a number of symptoms associated with, if they are not directly caused by, tuberculous disease of the supra-renal capsules. For example, the patient suffers from increasing weakness, and attacks of vomiting and faintness, with pallor and gradually increasing darkening of the skin, to which the name of "bronzing" has been given. It has hitherto been looked upon as practically incurable, because of the failure of ordinary medicines to check its progress or effect its cure, but, during the last few months, experiments have been made in various countries in treating the disease by the administration of supra-renal tissue in increasing doses, generally given in the form of pills. A case has been recently reported, in an Italian contemporary, in which, during such treatment, the symptoms of the patient rapidly disappeared, and she completely recovered her health. The case is not quite conclusive, as it is a well-known fact that, in these patients, there often appears to be a sort of intermission of the disease, for some weeks or months at a time; but, afterwards, the symptoms return with increased force, and the patient rapidly sinks. But there is no doubt that the new treatment is based, to some extent, upon the principle, which is proving of value in the treatment of diseases of other organs; that is to say, that patients suffering from the disorganisation of an organ should be given preparations made from the same healthy organ taken from one of the lower animals. It is evident that a definite improvement has followed this treatment in several well-marked cases, and it is therefore probable that it will be carried out in other patients suffering from Addison's Disease, and, perhaps, with an increasing measure of success.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)