

Medical Matters.**SURGERY versus SUICIDE.**

AN interesting case has recently been published which not only illustrates a surgical triumph, but also the failure of a popular, and hitherto successful, method of suicide. A high-class Japanese, aged 40 years, and suffering from mental depression, decided to kill himself by the well-known national method of *Hara-kiri*, which, as is well-known, has been practised in Japan for many centuries. He, therefore, thrust a butcher's knife into his abdomen on the left side, and drew it across to a corresponding spot on the opposite side, thus widely opening the abdominal cavity, and allowing a considerable part of the viscera to escape. The wound was found to measure about 9 inches in length, from side to side, just above the umbilicus. The transverse colon, omentum, and several feet of small intestine, protruded from the wound; the whole being also cut in various places, and the protruding portions much soiled from contact with the clothing and dust. An anæsthetic was administered to the patient, and a number of blood clots were sponged out of the abdominal cavity; several arteries, which had been cut across, being ligatured. The protruded intestines were then thoroughly cleansed; but it was found that about 18 inches of the bowel were so lacerated and torn that this could not be saved. The injured part was therefore cut out, and the open ends of the intestine were joined together. In fact, the operation was one involving every difficulty with which abdominal surgeons are now acquainted; but the patient recovered quickly and completely, illustrating thereby not only the modern success of surgery and antiseptics, but also the manner in which, when opposed to such forces, even an ancient and hitherto invariably successful form of self-destruction can utterly fail in its purpose.

THE VACCINATION BILL.

THE House of Lords has once more come to the rescue of the nation against hasty and ill-considered legislation; and by a majority of 40 against 38 it refused to accept the clause to which we drew attention last week. This was known as the "conscience" clause, inasmuch as it provided that any parent by making

a statutory declaration that he objected upon conscientious grounds to his children being vaccinated, should be excused from all penalties for non-compliance with the Act. There has been a very general feeling throughout the medical profession that the proposed clause would be simply fatal to compulsory vaccination, and our influential contemporary, *The Medical Times*, put the whole question in a nutshell, in the following sentence:—"If vaccination is a real safeguard against a disfiguring disease, it should require no argument to prove that it is the duty of a Government, towards the whole community which it rules, to enforce the effectual observance of the precaution. If vaccination is of no service, then no Government of a free country has the slightest right to enforce its adoption upon anyone. There is no half-way house in this matter. Vaccination is either useful as a preventative of disease, or it is a useless, and therefore an utterly unjustifiable, procedure." In the debate in the House of Lords, Lord Lister spoke in favour of the measure, not on the ground that he approved of it, but because the Act would be, to a large extent, experimental in its nature, and because he had been definitely promised by the Government that they would, next year, introduce an Act making re-vaccination essential. It is a well-known fact that the absence of such a provision has greatly reduced the value of the existing Vaccination Acts, and perhaps has been the cause of a considerable amount of disbelief in the efficiency of the process. Vaccination in infancy undoubtedly protects the child for the first seven or eight years of its life, but to a large extent its effect appears then to have worn out, and the process, therefore, ought to be repeated. Indeed, as a practical fact, it should be again performed in early adult life, because so long as a person can be successfully inoculated, he is liable to an attack of small-pox. It is well-established that, after the first vaccination, even if it be not repeated, an attack of small-pox will be of a modified and simple character, rarely, if ever, dangerous to life, and comparatively rarely leaving any disfiguring marks. Despite Lord Lister's speech, the Lords threw out the Clause. But the Government having carried the point again in the House of Commons, issued a special whip in the Upper House, and thus succeeded in passing the objectionable provision by 55 votes against 45.

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