

THE DYSPHAGIA OF TUBERCULOSIS.

THERE is no symptom in tuberculosis which is the cause of more suffering and distress than the dysphagia which is so frequently present in the laryngeal type of the disease. The problem of feeding is rendered doubly urgent and is not easily solved.

The act of deglutition is the cause of the pain which results from ulceration about the epiglottis, pharyngeal walls, arytenoids or in the aryepiglottic folds. These situations are exposed to contact with food during its passage into the oesophagus or are directly concerned in the function of swallowing. When the ulceration is entirely within the larynx, on the vocal cords, ventricular bands, or on the posterior wall of the larynx, dysphagia is not present. When the epiglottis is much involved its mobility is impaired and as a result of its fixation there is also trouble from liquids and food entering the larynx during deglutition. Then a spasm is set up, food is regurgitated and may pass through the nose. So the distress is increased and the patient becomes more and more unwilling to take nourishment in the usual way. The disastrous effects of dysphagia are very quickly manifest in impaired nutrition, not only from interference with ingestion of food but also from the depression of the nervous system resulting from frequently recurring pain.

The indications in dealing with this condition are, then, to secure rest for the parts, to avoid any movement which produces pain, to protect the parts from injury and to maintain nutrition. It is impossible to inhibit the act of deglutition though it may be reduced in frequency. When the pain is intense the patient resists swallowing to get rid of secretion and refuses food even though hungry. I have known patients refuse all food for twenty-four hours rather than suffer the pain produced by swallowing. It is necessary then, at the earliest possible moment after dysphagia is present to administer only highly concentrated food of such a character that it is ingested with the least possible discomfort and with the fewest acts of