

AN INDEX OF PROGNOSIS

VI

END-RESULTS OF TREATMENT.

ABDOMEN, GUNSHOT WOUNDS OF.—(See GUNSHOT WOUNDS.)

ABDOMINAL INJURIES.—We have to consider the consequence of (1) Blows on the abdomen; (2) Punctured wounds. It will be necessary to set these forth according to the viscera which may be injured.

I. Contusions.—After a severe blow on the abdomen, the patient is usually seen within a few hours by a medical man, and the diagnosis and prognosis at first are often very difficult. Such injuries as a kick by a horse, buffer accidents, and cases where a vehicle has run over the abdomen, are always to be regarded as entailing very serious possibilities, because great force may have been localized upon a small area. It is extremely important to realize that the degree of shock when the patient is first seen is most misleading as a guide to diagnosis or prognosis. Thus, on the one hand, to take an extreme case, a powerful athlete may die outright as a result of a blow over the solar plexus, without any laceration of abdominal viscera whatever. An area the size of a half-crown is well known to pugilists as the 'mark,' where a hard punch will induce instantaneous shock. If the injured person does not die at once, however, he will almost certainly recover completely, provided that the contusion of the abdomen has not ruptured any important viscera or vessels.

On the other hand, the prevalent impression that after rupture of one of the important organs the patient's pulse will necessarily be quick and feeble, is misleading to the last degree, and many reputations have suffered because the doctor has seen a patient soon after the injury, and, trusting to the normal pulse and absence of shock, has sent him home with a good prognosis, whereas six hours later he was dying of internal hemorrhage. Most hospitals have tragic stories to tell of this calamity. Ruptured spleen is particularly apt to lie hidden in this way. In a series of 15 cases of rupture of various abdominal viscera studied by the writer, in only 4 was the pulse over 100 when first seen, and these four all died within twenty-four hours.

It ought to be well recognized that prognosis is absolutely impossible within a few hours of a severe injury of the abdomen, unless, of course, the patient is already obviously dying. Even if there are no symptoms whatever, he ought to be put to bed and carefully watched, the pulse