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Original Articles

TREATMENT OF DIFFUSE SEPTIC PERITONITIS*

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In 1880 Mikulicz¹ operated for the first time upon a perforating gastric ulcer, and suggested the possibility that laparotomy might be beneficial in diffuse perforative peritonitis. Lawson Tait², in 1883, and Leyden³, in 1884, also recommended operative treatment, but in spite of this Schlange⁴, von Bergmann's assistant, in a paper published in 1884, strongly emphasizes the inadvisability of laparotomy in the treatment of the condition. In 1886 Krönlein⁵ advised immediate operation in perforation peritonitis, and expressed the opinion that, in view of the uniformly unsatisfactory results of medical treatment, recovery in one case out of many would warrant the adoption of surgical measures, but the first statistics of operative treatment of peritonitis were published in 1890, when Stühler⁶, of Strasburg, collected 78 cases of drainage of the peritoneum.

A little more than twenty years ago recovery from diffuse septic peritonitis occurred only in exceptional cases, a diagnosis of peritonitis was practically equivalent to a sentence of death, and as a rule operation only accelerated the fatal termination. Scarcely any other disease can be mentioned, the mortality of which has been so greatly reduced by changes in treatment, and there is no doubt that great progress has been made in the treatment of all forms of peritonitis, more especially during the last ten years. Ten or fifteen

*Read before the Academy of Medicine, Toronto, Jan. 7th, 1913.