

Retrospect Department.

QUARTERLY RETROSPECT OF MEDICINE.

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DISEASES OF THE LUNGS.

On the Treatment of Pneumonia by the Ice bag.—Dr. Lees, in a paper read before the Harveian Society on 17th October, claims beneficial results from this mode of treatment, and cites the history of eighteen cases of pneumonia in which he had given the method full trial. When a treatment for a disease so self-limiting as pneumonia is advocated, one cannot help feeling critical and called upon to look closely into the evidence in favor of the new agent. There are eighteen cases cited. Two of these can be dismissed at once, since the writer of the paper acknowledges that the icebag was not beneficial. In two other cases the diagnosis is doubtful. A child aged 3 years (son of Dr. Lees) has "catarrh for two or three days, when he rapidly became acutely ill; the temperature ran up to 104° , the breathing was very rapid, and his lips began to look a little dusky. Just the faintest impairment of resonance was to be detected at the base of one lung." This is very slight evidence on which to base a diagnosis of pneumonia, but the next case is even more doubtful. "A boy, aged 4, has a week's catarrh and a sudden temperature of 104.5° ; pulse 140; respiration 50, occasionally interrupted by a short cough; a shade of loss of resonance at the left base below the angle of the scapula. At this spot, and also at the corresponding spot on the other side of the chest, inspiration was a little harsh and attended by a little râle, and expiration was too plain." They may have been pneumonias, but when a plan of treatment is advocated, the first and most important question is whether the patient really had the disease which was said to be cured. Of the other fourteen patients none were old and none of them had an alcoholic history, and with the exception of cases 11, 14 and 15, all were of the kind that would do well under any kind of treatment. Take, for example case 3, a