

Removal of Needles from the Heart.

The *Central f. Chirurgie* contains the following account of a case of Stetzner's, communicated to the German Surgical Society :

A student, after a spree, sought to commit suicide by driving a sewing needle into his heart. Twelve hours after the introduction of the needle the first serious symptoms made their appearance. He then had pain in the cardiac region, difficulty in breathing, and a loud pericardial murmur at the apex. After thirty-six hours the symptoms became so very serious that an operation for the removal of the foreign body was determined upon. No trace of the needle being found either under the skin or in the intercostal space, a piece of the fifth rib was resected, thus opening up the left pleural cavity ; then the pericardium was opened up, and about a teaspoonful of cloudy pericardial fluid ran out, and now the needle could be felt lying diagonally in the right ventricle. They succeeded in driving its head out through the anterior wall of the heart, and then fixing it in this position with the fingernail. The irregular and violent beating of the heart made it very difficult to catch the foreign body with the forceps, and, in attempting it, it again slipped into the ventricle, but this time assuming a vertical instead of a diagonal position, rendering it impossible to make any further attempt at its removal ; and besides this an iodoform tampon, used to block up the hole into the pleural cavity, was drawn into the cavity by a very deep inspiratory effort. The tampon could not be found again. The wound was thoroughly tamponed, and the patient recovered in four weeks, although in the meantime he had suffered from a severe pneumothorax, with copious exudation. At present the patient enjoys good health, and feels no effects from his escape. There is neither heart murmur nor abnormal pulse, nor any trace whatever of the pleural exudation. Where the needle now is, is of course, mere matter of speculation ; it may be in the heart, or it may have gone on into the mediastinum.

Dr. Iver Hardt has collected together, out of medical literature, twenty-two cases of needle in the heart, of which nineteen were found accidentally on making autopsies. In three cases the needles had been driven into the heart accidentally, and penetrated such a short distance that they were easily extracted.

No case similar to the present, in which the heart has been laid bare by splitting the pericardium, is mentioned in medical literature.

In the discussion upon the paper, Hahn, of Berlin, showed the half of a knitting needle which V. Bergmann had removed from the heart of a girl eleven years of age. It had been driven into her breast by a blow from a slipper. The patient suffered immediately from asphyxia, and was removed to the hospital. Under the left third rib, between the parasternal mamillary lines, a black point could be seen, which was felt to be the end of the needle. There was a blowing, systolic murmur at the apex. As the needle was slowly withdrawn it was seen to have a distinctly pendulum movement. Immediately after the extraction, the previously very rapid pulse sank to ninety per minute. The needle was withdrawn very slowly, in order to give time for a clot to form in the punctured wound, and thus avoid hæmorrhage into the pericardial sac, which in some cases of punctured wound of the heart has been the cause of death. Von Bergmann said that he thought there could be no doubt in this case of the puncture of the heart muscle by the needle, because the murmur changed in character while the needle was being withdrawn, and when completely removed the murmur ceased entirely.

MEDICINE.

Diabetes : What it is.

In a notable paper by F. W. Pavy, M. D., F. R. S., on diabetes, occur the following remarks on this subject :—

"It seems to me that what occurs in health is this : the carbo-hydrate absorbed from the intestines is stopped by the liver, converted into glycogen and then into fat, instead of being passed through the organ and appearing in the general circulation. If, however, it passes through the organ we have diabetes. But what is at the bottom of this faulty process ? It seems to be a faulty condition arising apparently from a faulty condition of the venous blood. . . . If the liver be not in a good venous condition we have the chemistry of the liver immediately altered, and sugar occurs in the urine. This alteration of portal blood may be produced in a number of ways ; it may be by diseases or by experiment. In the first place by the injection of defibrinized blood into the portal circulation. In