

CHAPTER XXX.

Cardiac Diseases.

PERICARDITIS.

Pericarditis, or inflammation of the pericardium, occurs in all animals, but is most frequently met with amongst cattle. It may be caused by injury, and in such cases is described as traumatic pericarditis; or it may arise from ordinary causes. Traumatic pericarditis is noticed oftener among cattle than other animals. Pericarditis often occurs as a complication of rheumatism, influenza, pleurisy, and other debilitating diseases, rheumatism being a common cause of the disease in the human family. It may also be associated with chronic disease of any organ in the body. After inflammation of the pericardium, a certain amount of effusion takes place into the pericardial sac, constituting a condition known as hydrops pericardii, or dropsy of the pericardium. There is also a great tendency to the formation of false membranes on the pericardium, and they have been found in some cases half an inch in thickness.

Symptoms.—The pulse is hard and irritable, is easily excited by the slightest movement, and is sometimes of an intermittent character. The respirations are irregular, but on the whole are quickened. The symptoms may very easily be mistaken for those of pleurisy; and, as before stated, pleurisy may co-exist with pericarditis. The eyes of the patient appear unnaturally bright; auscultation reveals, usually, an increase in the number of heart-beats, as well as a change in their character; the mouth is hotter than usual; the ears and legs are alternately hot and cold, and all the general indications of pyrexia are present; the bowels and appetite are irregular, and when hydrops