

## MEDICINE.

*Dr. Richardson, F.R.S., on Action of the Septinous Poison on the Production of Fever.*

In a lecture delivered by Dr. Richardson before the Society of Medical Officers of Health, at their last meeting, a new theory was offered on the action of the poisons of the contagious diseases in the production of symptoms which mark those diseases, and especially the symptom of fever. In a lecture delivered before the same Society, in the year 1865, the author detailed his original experiments on the poisonous action of an organic substance he had obtained from the sero-sanguineous fluid that had been removed by Mr. Spencer Wells from the peritoneal cavity of a woman suffering from pyæmia after the operation of ovariectomy. To this organic poisonous substance he (Dr. Richardson) at that time gave the name of septine, and he showed not only that it would communicate fatal disease to an inferior animal, but that the same disease could be communicated from the secretions of the primarily infected animal to other healthy animals in direct series. He also showed in the same research that the organic poison could be made to combine with acids so as to form salts which retained the poisonous qualities of the original substance. That a similar poisonous substance is present in decomposing blood, and that the poison can be transmitted in a series of animals, have since been confirmed by the independent researches of many physiologists, and the fact may be considered as fully established, although great difference of opinion still remains as to the nature of the organic product, some assigning to it purely physical, others vital properties.

We may be able by and by to discuss these different views at length. At present we are intent only to indicate the new theory which the author, whose communication we now notice, offers as to the mode in which the organic poisons produce their peculiar effects. On this important