

DIPHThERITIC PARALYSIS.

The cause of this frequent sequela of diphtheria is not well understood. It is most probably a *neuritis migrans*, as Fagge called it. This theory would go to show that a morbid process, starting in the part most affected by the diphtheritic poison, travels along the fibres until the centres are reached. Trousseau pointed out that when the disease was cutaneous, the limbs were affected as early as the fauces. As against the theory that it is due to a general systemic poison, we have the fact that faucial paralysis is the rule, and true paralysis has been known to follow an abscess of the tonsil, as also a case of parotitis. Some authors assert that the paralysis occurs after the primary disease has ceased; but this is certainly not true, although in many cases it does not show itself till the patient is thought to be well. It not unfrequently begins, says Sanné, on the fifth or sixth, or even as early as the second day from the beginning of the diphtheria,

It has been all along looked upon as having a favorable prognosis. But recent observation would go to prove that it is a very serious matter. The staff of the Great Ormond St. Hospital have concluded that, in children especially, it is attended by dread possibilities. The organs supplied mainly by the pneumogastric and phrenic nerves, viz., heart, lungs and larynx, are the ones through which danger comes to the sufferer. Cases of heart failure or paralysis; of pneumonia whether from disturbed innervation or from the irritation of the lungs by inhaled matters, the larynx having lost the power of properly protecting these organs, are frequent, and extremely dangerous. The muscles of respiration are sometimes attacked, giving a panting, difficult breathing as the result. Death may come on by more or less slow degrees in this way, accumulation of mucus from want of functional activity of the lungs, cyanosis and asphyxia. When the heart is the seat of the trouble, there is, says Duchenne, a sense of cardiac oppression and distress; small, slow, irregular pulse, becoming at times thready and imperceptible. The cardiac lesion is perhaps the most serious of the whole series, for though it may be cured, death is the usual result. Sometimes this organ is alone paralyzed.

The treatment which has so long been followed

in this form of paralysis has not been materially changed. A few years ago, the necessity of injecting the strychnia into the tissues was urged, but it is doubtful if the benefit derived from this drug is much if at all increased by this method of administration. Perhaps the syr. ferri, quin. et strychniæ phosphat. is as useful a preparation as any, combining as it does the specific action of the strychniæ with the useful tonic action of the other ingredients of the syrup.

Oertel objects to the use of either strychnia or nux vomica, depending upon ferruginous and other tonics; but the consensus of opinion is strongly against him. Massage of the limbs, stimulating baths as of warm salt water, and electricity are all useful in their place. The patient may have to be fed for weeks through the stomach-tube or per rectum, the most perfect nutrition possible being *a sine qua non* in the management of such cases.

THE VIRTUE OF THE PROFESSION.

The men of the medical profession are rarely credited with the virtue that their conduct entitles them to; there is no profession or occupation beset with so many temptations and opportunities as ours. The doctor is made the repository of the family secrets and the misdoings of the patients. With closed doors and drawn window blinds in the doctor's private office, the lady patient describes her symptoms and relates in detail any circumstances that may stand in a causative relation to a disease peculiar to her sex. During a long course of treatment there springs up, by gradual growth, a simple familiarity which may ripen into an admiration on the part of the patient, encouraged by the kind and gentle treatment and sympathetic manner of the benevolent physician. With this state of facts, which are not in the least overdrawn, it is highly creditable to the profession that so few violate their trust and take advantage of the weakness of the gentler sex under these circumstances. We do not pretend to say that the physician is purer by nature than men of other professions, but through their special education, and the sense of honor inherent in every right-minded man, they learn to exercise self-denial with those whose physical welfare is committed to their charge. Opportunities for blackmail are fruitful under the above conditions, yet few are improved.