

THE DIAGNOSIS OF INCIPIENT PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS.

TO make a positive diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis in the first or incipient stage is always a difficult problem. At the same time an early diagnosis of this dread disease is of the utmost importance to the attending physician, and especially to the patient. It is in the early stage that we may with some degree of hope look for benefit from treatment—medicinal, hygienic and climatic. The life of the patient, or at least the duration of his life, may depend upon our early diagnosis of his condition. The data upon which such a diagnosis can be made must, therefore, be most carefully sought for and most judiciously considered. Unfortunately, it is at this stage of the disease in which we find so little upon which to found a positive diagnosis.

In a case of suspected tubercular lung disease we must take into consideration the patient's family history, his personal history, the history of his present trouble and his present condition. As heredity plays such a prominent part in the predisposition to tuberculosis, a careful enquiry must be made as to the cause of death of any immediate relatives. Tuberculosis having occurred in one or more members of the patient's family will at once put us on the alert by arousing the suspicion of the same trouble in the case under consideration. The absence, however, of any family history of tuberculosis does not preclude the possibility of this disease. Any one, no matter how good his family history, may be attacked by this insidious affection. The points in his personal history to be enquired into most carefully are what diseases of the respiratory passages, of the lymphatic glands, of the bones, has he suffered from previously, and has he been exposed to the infection of tuberculosis. These diseases of the respiratory passages may have been simply predisposing causes, or they may have been actually tubercular in their character. Diseases of the lymph-glands and of the bones and joints are often, as we now know,