

A NOTE ON CANCER OF THE THYROID, AND ITS EXTENSION TO THE LUNGS BY MEANS OF THE BLOOD-VESSELS.

BY FRANCIS J. SHEPHERD, M.D., F.R.C.S.E. (Hon.),
OF MONTREAL, CANADA.

CASES of cancer of the thyroid are always undesirable to operate on. The writer has operated on many but in very few has the result been entirely satisfactory. The majority of cases have succumbed to local extension at the site of the disease; others have had no local recurrences but have died from extension to the lungs. In only one has a satisfactory result been obtained, this was operated on some ten years ago. After a second operation for recurrence the patient became myxœdematous and has been obliged to take desiccated thyroid ever since but is in good health.

In some cases the extension to the lungs is through the lymphatics, but again the transmission may be directly through the blood-vessels, as in the case reported below. This method of extension is much more common than is supposed and accounts for the rapid dissemination and termination of such cases. In the case under consideration, however, it was some years before the disease extended and for four years she continued her vocation in perfectly good health. When, however, the tumor again showed itself in the neck the growth was rapid and extension to the lungs by means of the blood-vessels quickly followed. This was strange as no glands in the neck or its neighborhood were involved, which accounts, no doubt, for the long interval of comparative health.

This case also teaches us that patients suffering from early cancer should always be operated on, for relief for a time is generally obtained. One case operated on some fifteen years ago had been under observation for a year or more, the patient steadily refusing operation. However, the growth suddenly enlarged greatly (evidently due to hemorrhage), causing great discomfort. Immediate operation showed that the sudden en-