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THE CURATIVE EFFECT OF EXPLORATORY
LAPAROTOMY.*

By FRANCIS J. SHEPHERD, M.D., C.M.,

Professor of Anatomy McGill University, Surgeon to the Montreal General Hospital.

It has been known for years that in certain cases the mere performance of abdominal incision has some remarkable effects on growths and other conditions of the abdomen. This has been widely recognized especially in cases of tuberculosis of the peritoneum. In 1889, Mr. Lawson Tait (*Edinburgh Medical Jour.*), drew attention to the fact that certain diseases of the abdomen seem to yield to surgical treatment applied to them by accident, and that he had more than once seen tumours, often of large size, disappear after a mere exploratory incision. These cases he reported at the time, but his statements were not believed. The cases in which he had seen tumours disappear in this way were chiefly in connection with the liver, spleen and head of the pancreas. From the number of cases of this kind observed by him, Mr. Tait is satisfied that the disappearance is not a mere coincidence, but that the opening of the peritoneal cavity has a direct influence in setting up the process of absorption of the tumour. Every one knows that after the smallest wound of the peritoneum, an intense thirst is set up which lasts for some days, and that this thirst is not set up after

* Read before the Montreal Medico-Chirurgical Society, January 12th, 1894.