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THE TREATMENT OF CHRONIC EMPYEMA.*

BY A. PRIMROSE. M.B., C.M. (EDIN.), M.R.C.S. (ENG.).

Professor of Anatomy and Associate Professor of Clinical Surgery in the University of Toronto;
Surgeon to the Hospital for Sick Children, St. Michael's Hospital, etc.

THE treatment of chronic empyema is a subject of sufficient importance to bring before this Association. The remarks I have to make on the subject are based upon my own experience, and chiefly upon thirty cases the records of whose clinical history I have preserved. Fifty per cent. of these cases were under ten years of age. It would appear that an empyema is more common on the left side than on the right. Of twenty-six of my cases I find that sixteen were on the left side, nine were on the right, and one was a case of double empyema. In other published statistics this appears to hold true. Statistics, too, would go to show that empyema of the left side is more fatal than of the right. Of my fatal cases 33 per cent. were on the right side, and 67 per cent. on the left. This has been ascribed by some authors to the proximity and intimate relations of the heart to the left pleura, as compared with the conditions obtaining on the right side. I may make the further observation and state that of my cases of empyema, which developed a chronic course, 86 per cent. were on the left side, and 14 per cent. on the right, apparently suggesting the greater likelihood of an empyema developing a chronic course when it exists on the left side.

The object of my paper is to deal with the treatment of these cases of chronic empyema. Occasionally an empyema will persist and run a chronic course, remaining unopened for a long period. This, I believe, is possible in certain cases of pure pneumococcus infection. Thus a child five

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