

so wished to save other members incurring a useless expense.

Dr. SHEPHERD read a paper upon "The Curative Effect of Exploratory Laparotomy," which is as follows:

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 tumors, 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 tumors 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 tumor. Everyone 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 opening any other serous cavity, or in wounds of the abdomen where there is no injury of the peritoneum. Mr. Tait relates a number of remarkable cases in this paper. One case particularly deserves mention. A lady, *æt.* 54, had an abdominal section performed for supposed gall stones or possibly cancer of the liver. The liver was found covered with large, hard nodules, one of which closely imitated the lump which had led to the diagnosis of distended gall bladder. The case had so much the appearance of malignant disease, that no hopes were given of her recovery. Contrary to expectation, however, the patient completely recovered, and was alive and well several years after. A number of other cases are also given. In no less than three out of four cases of greatly enlarged spleen, tumor disappeared without more being done than opening the abdomen and examining the growth, and in one case of tumor of head of pancreas, with great emaciation, exploratory incision resulted in entire disappearance of the tumor in five or six weeks, and complete restoration to former health. In the case of supposed cancerous nodules of the liver, the evidence would have been much stronger had Mr. Tait excised a portion for microscopic examination. It is hard to believe that there was malignancy in any of the cases, but the fact remains that the gross clinical appearances were those of malignancy, and that the

observers were skilled in recognizing the normal appearance of the organs. It is possible that some of the lesions may have been due to syphilis. In 1891, Dr. J. White, of Philadelphia, published in the *Annals of Surgery* an interesting and exhaustive paper on the "Curative Effects of Operation *per se*," and came to the conclusion that epilepsy, certain abdominal tumors, peritoneal effusions, and also tubercle were benefited by these operations, and though one of the possible factors was anæsthesia, also psychical influence, relief of tension and reflex action may enter into the therapeutics of these cases. He does not think accident or coincidence explains them.

Pierre Delbet (*Bull. de la Société Alchimique de Paris*, Oct. and Nov., 1892) reports the case of a child, *æt.* 2½ years, whose health had been failing for some months. On examination, a large, smooth, firm tumor was found on the right side of the abdomen extending from the costal cartilages to the iliac fossa. The diagnosis of sarcoma or carcinoma of liver was made. An exploratory operation was performed, and the tumor was found to be an enlarged right lobe of the liver, pale in color, with violaceous marblings. Enlarged glands were found in the hepatic omentum. Punctures were made, but revealed nothing. The result was immediate and surprising; in three days the child regained appetite and cheerfulness, the liver rapidly decreased in size and returned to normal in two months. The character of the enlarged liver was revealed later, when syphilitic gummata appeared on forehead and scalp.

Dr. Wm. White in the elaborate article in the *Annals of Surgery*, referred to above, cites many cases where exploratory abdominal incision relieved symptoms of pain, vomiting, etc., and also some cases of tumor, which shrank away after operation, although at the time the operator considered them malignant and gave a hopeless prognosis.

Prof. Von Mosetig, of Vienna, in 1888, showed a case where he had performed exploratory laparotomy some time before for a tumor which filled the whole pelvis; it was quite fixed, and removal was not attempted, so the wound was closed. To his surprise, when examined, 14 days later, he found the tumor had shrunk to half its former size, and it continued to diminish, so that when shown to the Imperial Society of Physicians at Vienna, it was no larger than a man's fist. He thought the disappearance might be due to the intense hyperæmia observed during the operation; in the same way sometimes sarcomata may disappear under the influence of severe erysipelas. Cases also occur where, for a time, in malignant cases great improvement takes place as the result of exploration, but these cases always relapse and the patient soon succumbs.