

THE WISDOM OF SURGICAL INTERFERENCE IN HÆMATEMESIS AND MELÆNA FROM GASTRIC AND DUODENAL ULCER.

BY

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Hæmatemesis, although a common symptom in gastric ulcer, is rarely sufficiently large in quantity to cause anxiety, yet the mortality from hæmorrhage in this condition of the stomach is not inconsiderable. Leube estimates the mortality to be about 5 per cent., and Welch at from 3 per cent. to 5 per cent. The question of the propriety of surgical interference in certain cases has received considerable attention of late, from surgeons as well as physicians, and the general tone of the medical press at the present time is very conservative indeed. It may be said that while there is, perhaps, a fairly general consensus of opinion that the surgeon should be consulted in cases of frequently repeated small hæmorrhages, which, in spite of rest, abstinence from stomach feeding, and medical therapy, continue to recur and threaten the patient's life: yet it is as a last resource, and that in the presence of large copious hæmorrhage, surgery is of little or no avail. There seem to be two very good reasons for this opinion in the facts that the large majority of cases recover under medical and dietetic treatment, and that surgery up to the present has not been particularly successful. Mikulicz has operated four times, and three of the four patients died, and adds that he only knows of two successful cases, the one of his own and one of Roux. Hartman* has collected 12 cases of operation, only four being successful; and would be inclined to trust to rest, strict diet, and the application of ligatures to the four extremities, with the addition of intravenous injection of normal saline solution.

On the other hand, Dieulafoy strongly urges immediate operation in every case of hæmatemesis in which the loss of blood equals or exceeds half a litre, especially if it recurs within twenty-four hours, and reports a case of hæmorrhage from a superficially ulcerated patch, in which he gathered up into a fold the ulcerated mucous membrane and ligated it, with recovery. Keen, in his Cartwright lectures, takes the conservative view of Mikulicz and Hartman and would abstain from operative measures except in cases of repeated small hæmorrhages, which will almost surely finally destroy life. Leube says surgical interference is absolutely indicated by repeated small hæmorrhages, especially if accompanied by

* Sem. Méd., 1898, pp. 7-8.