

The elasticity of the skin of the leg is considerable, but time must be given and the sutures tightened gradually. If this be done it will be found that the surgeon can close a wound which at first sight seemed far too large for such a result. Ulcers treated in this way often heal by first intention.

April 25th.

SWITZERLAND.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Cancer of the Œsophagus.

DR. F. DE QUERVAIN, surgeon to the Chaux de Fonds Hospital, has in a case of deep œsophageal cancer achieved a success which, though only palliative, seems worthy of record. The cancer began at the level of the cricoid cartilage and extended almost to the arch of the aorta. Dr. de Quervain performed gastrostomy to enable the patient to be properly nourished after the removal of the tumour. 10 days later he removed the whole of the tumour together with part of the thyroid gland and the left recurrent nerve already involved, drawing up the distal end of the œsophagus as far as possible and severing unhealthy tissue. The wound was stuffed with gauze and healed without reaction. A pharyngeal fistula remains through which saliva is discharged; this is absorbed by some pads changed three times a day. The patient, who was admitted to the hospital on Jan. 9th and was dismissed on Feb. 11th, has taken up his work again as a farmer, and was seen on March 11th in good health and was rapidly gaining weight. Dr. de Quervain is a young surgeon of the Bernese school of Kocher.

Antitoxin Treatment of Tetanus.

Dr. E. Tavel of the Bacteriological Institute of Berne reports on 12 cases of tetanus treated with his antitoxin. In the first two successful cases (in 1894) the serum of a dog was used in a strength of from 1,000,000 to 2,000,000. The dog succumbing to some intercurrent illness Dr. Tavel did not succeed till 1897 in obtaining efficacious serum and then from a horse in a strength of from 1,000,000,000 to 2,000,000,000. This serum has kept well and remained efficacious for a year at a time. It has been used in 10 cases by different medical men, the doses varying from one to 16, the cures taking place slowly after some weeks—gradually but surely, in some cases quite remarkably so. Seven of these cases recovered, one of the fatal cases being desperate at the time injections were commenced. This contrasts well with another report of 11 fatal cases out of 13 where antitoxin was not resorted to. The last three cases of Professor Girard and Professor Kocher were interesting on account of the mode of application, the serum being injected into the lateral ventricle of the brain after trephining and in doses of five grammes on several occasions, intravenous injections of from 20 to 50 grammes being also used. Two of these patients recovered. Professor Roux of Lausanne, whose results with intracerebral injections of antitoxin are about to be published, considers the prognosis to be absolutely favourable if the operation is performed quite at the onset of the symptoms.

Zürich, April 24th.

ROME.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The Congress against Pellagra.

OF the "Seven Plagues of Italy" there is none more pernicious than pellagra or "elephantiasis Italica," a constitutional or blood distemper operating destructively on the integument. What are its causes? If we go deep enough we find them in "miseria" and ignorance to begin with; secondarily, in malnutrition, particularly in that perverted form of alimentation which confines itself to maize and maize alone, oftener than not diseased itself; thirdly and lastly, in dirt or neglect of personal cleanliness and of elementary hygienic laws. That the consumption of maize, and that of an impure kind, to the exclusion of other diet is a main factor in producing pellagra is proved by the circumstance that in the Lombardo-Venetian territory where this is the chief food of the agricultural labourer the disease is mostly to be found,

while in Calabria and Sicily where maize is practically unknown no such disease exists. Nay, further, in the Alta Valtellina, much nearer Lombardo-Venetia, pellagra numbers no victims because there there is neither cultivation nor consumption of maize; but in the Valtellina Bassa where there are both the disease is painfully in evidence. About 17 years ago an enlightened and vigorous effort was made in Milan to come to close quarters with pellagra—its cause, its cure, and its prevention—and a committee of 38 members, chiefly medical, went thoroughly into the problem. Eight years' study on the part of these gentlemen culminated in at least one practical step—the institution of the "Pellagrosario," or home for children inheriting the pellagrose cachexia or in the first stage of the disease, and, thanks to royal and local munificence, in 1890 the first "pellagrosario" was erected on a site at Inzago, some 15 miles from Milan. Previously to this the means of encountering the malady were the "locande sanitarie," or sanitary dispensaries, with "forni co-operativi" (coöperative bakeries) and cheap kitchens where food of a varied, sound, and sustaining kind was doled out to the sufferers. This, however, did little more than alleviate the symptoms of a malady already established, while chronic cases of an aggravated type were sent to hospital and the worst cases of all, those afflicted with pellagromania, were accommodated in asylums as on the whole the preferable course to letting them commit suicide by *sus. per coll.* on the handiest tree or by taking a header into the nearest pool. The committee wisely concentrated its remedial efforts on the rising generation which had still a chance of rescue from the depraved conditions of their nutrition with the inevitable sequelæ of mental hebetude, melancholic tendency, and general apathy towards the cleanly virtues. "Remove these incipient victims," practically said the committee, "from their deteriorating surroundings; wash, feed, and clothe them well; educate them so as to rouse their minds and to make them the intelligent custodians of their own health, so that on their return to their families they may have an enlightening and salutary influence on their brothers and sisters or even parents, and so induce the atmosphere in which neglect of sanitary law does not thrive." All this the "Pellagrosario d'Inzago" endeavours to achieve, and with what results? Of the Milanese communes 96 sent "pellagrosi" between 12 and 22 years of age to Inzago—277 males and 275 females. After treatment extending over a series of months 238 of the former and 250 of the latter have returned home cured; others, including 80 sent during the last statistical year, are still under observation. In that year 40 girls were admitted in the months of October, November, and December, and 40 boys during January, February, and March. The former, besides reading and writing, were instructed in special knowledge necessary for the agricultural labourer; the latter, in addition to the above, were taught some of the main principles of husbandry; and both girls as well as boys were exercised in suitable manual work, indoors and outdoors. 60 per cent. came in "analfabeti" (unlettered). Not one went out unable to write his or her name. Much of this gratifying result is attributed to the skill, the energy, and the perseverance of the director of the Istituto d'Inzago, Dr. Giuseppe Friz and the three excellent "Suore" (sisters) of the Adoratrici della Rivolta d'Adda who carry out his instructions. Meanwhile, the example afforded by the Institute cannot but fructify ere long in the multiplication of others in the pellagrose districts. Sanguine anticipation in this direction was afforded at the Congresso contro la Pellagra recently held at Padua. A paper read by Dr. Iginio Sormani of Milan on "Pellagrosario o Locande Sanitarie?" once more put in evidence the superiority of the Inzago Institute to the preceding practice, but dwelt with much cogency on the fact that not till the peasantry are educated out of their superstitious reverence for tradition and their misgivings as to hygienic innovation will even Inzago have its fair chance or its normal effect. Others of the "congressisti" (Dr. Ceresoli of Brescia, Professor Rezzara of Bergamo, and Dr. Brunati of Como) made valuable contributions to the better understanding of the causes of the disease and to the more effective devising of remedial legislation, while Professor Zambroni of Ferrara raised a most profitable discussion on the treatment of "pellagrosi" in infancy. The transactions of the Congress, of which the official publication is announced, will be found to have advanced the solution of the problem in not a few directions, but the grand difficulty in all Italian reforms—the economic question—still throws its sombre shadow over