

**PERITONITIS. THE  
LETT SOMIAN  
LECTURES FOR 1894**

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Peritonitis. The Lettsomian Lectures for 1894 by Frederick Treves

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**FREDERICK TREVES**

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PERITONITIS.

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THE LETTSOMIAN LECTURES FOR 1894

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BY

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The first three Lectures are printed as they were delivered before the Medical Society of London. The fourth Lecture has been added in order to make the consideration of the subject more complete.

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## LECTURE I.

### **The Nature of Peritonitis.**

I HAVE ventured to select peritonitis as the subject of these lectures, not only on account of the fact that the diseased conditions known by that name still occupy a terrible prominence among the causes of death, but because the present time, appears to be peculiarly convenient for reviewing the clinical and pathological aspects of this fatal trouble, and for criticising opinions, which the custom of years has endued with a spurious appearance of accuracy.

**The nature of peritonitis.**—By peritonitis is understood an inflammation of the peritoneum. From the limited standpoint of morbid anatomy no exception can be taken to this definition, but when it is assumed that the various clinical phenomena which are classed together under the title of “peritonitis” are due, either solely or in the main, to an inflammation of the great serous membrane, then the definition becomes to some extent misleading.

It may almost be said that peritonitis, clinically as well as pathologically, has comparatively little to do with inflammation of the peritoneum, and it would be erroneous to state that the majority of those who die of what is called peritonitis die of a peritoneal inflammation.

In order that this very fundamental matter may be fully discussed it is necessary that two questions should be considered. The first concerns itself with the general nature of inflammation, and the second with the relation peritonitis bears to that process.

(1) *The purpose of inflammation.*—If one may judge from the terms and expressions which are in common use respecting inflammation, and if deductions may be drawn from those ready criticisms of the process which are uttered without