CASE
OF
MALFORMATION OF THE HEART,
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PIERRE Dornier, 18 years of age, died in the Hospital of Saint Pierre at Bruxelles, on the 28th June, 1817, and his body was examined on the morning of the 30th, in presence of Dr. Caroly, M. Lauthier, myself, and many of the pupils of the hospital.

The lungs were found adhering every where very firmly to the pleura costalis and pericardium. Tubercles and vomicae were scattered through their substance. The cavity of the pericardium contained four ounces of serum. The heart was very firm, and of a natural size. The aorta and pulmonary artery arose from the right ventricle. The septum ventriculorum, at its base, was wanting for an extent somewhat larger than the diameter of the aorta. The pulmonary artery was not much

smaller than natural, and at its origin was surrounded by some cartilaginous-like fibres, between which and the semilunar valve a small sac was formed. It was observed that the opening in the septum ventriculorum corresponded so exactly with the situation of the aorta at its origin, that the contractions of the left ventricle must have propelled its blood almost entirely into that vessel, while the blood of the right ventricle might have been divided equally between the two great arteries. So free, however, was the communication of the ventricles with each other, that in the diastole of the heart, it is presumable that the venous and arterial blood were ultimately mixed.

This man had been from birth of a blue colour. At times he appeared, by the testimony of one of his relations with whom I conversed, to have been almost black. His breathing was always short, and he could never, at any period of his life, walk far without support. For the last six years, he had been occasionally a patient at one or other of the city hospitals. When I first saw him, which was about a week before his death, he was spitting purulent matter, after hæmoptysis, and evidently in the last stage of consumption. The pulse was quick but regular, the motion of the heart however was very peculiar. He was always thin and infirm, but had grown to an average height.

It cannot, I think, be undeserving of notice, that with so remarkable a condition of the circulating system, this young man should have attained the age of 18 years, and ultimately died of a disease not apparently connected with so uncommon a deviation from ordinary structure. The case may further be received as an illustration of that principle in pathology first laid down, I believe, by Dr. Farre, that the source of danger in these cases of malformed heart, is the comparatively small size of the pulmonary artery, rather than the mere circumstance of the mixture of venous and arterial blood in the same vessel.