

## Medical Matters.

### POISONING BY CHLORATE OF POTASH.



A rare case is reported in a German contemporary last month of a patient for whom a solution—only three per cent. in strength—of chlorate of potash was ordered, for the purpose of gargling the throat. The tonsilitis for which it was ordered quickly subsided, but within a few hours the patient suffered from severe pain in the abdomen, with vomiting and diarrhoea, followed by complete collapse. The urine shortly afterwards was found to be of a deep brown colour, containing hæmoglobin, no red blood cells, but abundant hyaline casts. There was a little jaundice also on the second day. It was found that the patient had used seventeen grammes of salt in about three litres of water, but was not aware of having swallowed any. It was also ascertained that after using a similar gargle on a previous occasion, he had had some unpleasant symptoms. In about a fortnight he had completely recovered. The case is well worth remembering because of its rarity; the drug being given in this country in considerable doses, especially in cases of salivation after the use of mercury, and almost invariably with beneficial results. The symptoms are so peculiar as well as so unusual under the circumstances, as to render it somewhat doubtful whether it could have been the potash which was at fault, or, if so, whether the drug was pure; but the author of the paper appears to have taken considerable care to exclude other causes, and, therefore, as an example of the possible poisonous effect of chlorate of potash, the case is well worth notice.

### IS PSORIASIS CONTAGIOUS?

A curious case has been recently recorded, in a Danish medical contemporary, of a man who appeared to catch Psoriasis from a patient afflicted with that disease, and who was cured speedily and completely by the use of warm baths. Of course, this skin affection may, like others, be due to a parasitic cause, and then one would expect good to result from frequent ablutions. But neither the causation, nor this particular treatment, has hitherto been widely employed, nor regarded as proved, in this country.

### LIGHT RAYS IN SMALL-POX.

We recently drew attention to the interesting and important results obtained in the treatment of small-pox by means of coloured light—a system which has been so extensively tried abroad. It is now pointed out, in reference to this matter, that during the middle ages the system of treating small-pox by this method was widely and very

successfully adopted; that the method was originally advocated by Arabian physicians more than a thousand years ago; and that Gaddesden, an English physician, living about the year 1300, mentions that he cured the Prince of Wales of small-pox without any scarring, “by making all things red about his bed.” Verily there is nothing new under the sun.

### HOT AIR BATHS.

THE advantage of these in the treatment of disease, especially of the skin or mucous membranes, has been known for many hundred years, but their action has recently been investigated, with much scientific accuracy, by several Russian observers, and it has been proved that the main reason for their usefulness is that they bring about a marked increase in assimilation, and in the elimination of nitrogenous matter, together with a diminution of arterial tension. These facts have led the observers in question to study the effects of these baths in the treatment of phthical patients, and they find that very great benefit is afforded by the treatment during the early stages of the disease, oxidation being rendered more perfect, and muscular force and body weight being markedly increased.

### THE MICROBE OF PLAGUE.

This most ancient microbe, and yet the newest discovered by science, was shown at a recent meeting of the British Medical Association. It appears either as a diplococcus enclosed in a delicate capsule, or as a short bacillus deeply stained at the ends, which are somewhat rounded with a clear band or space in the centre; the former, however, being the form most frequently found. Now that it is discovered the next and most important point will be to find out how to destroy it—a necessity indeed with which science is faced in the case of all the other microscopical causes of disease, and a problem which we doubt not, will in due course be successfully solved.

### MILK DIET.

It is a time honoured custom to treat patients suffering from acute diseases, especially when the kidneys are affected, with an exclusively milk diet. And the cause of the success may perhaps be found in the fact, which has been recently described, that this fluid appears to act in the intestines as an antiseptic. In various cases in which accurate observations were made it was found that after the use of milk the bacteria in the dejections were very considerably reduced in number, and especially was this the case in typhoid fever patients. The general impression of skilled observers concerning the use of milk diet in cases of Bright's disease is that the best results are obtained when the mischief is acute, and that in the more chronic forms the benefits are not so perceptible.

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