

## Medical Matters.

### THE TREATMENT OF OBESITY.



THERE is at present, apparently, a great disinclination on the part of many people to appear, or to be, fat, and, in consequence, a large amount of patent remedies are flooding the country, each one of which undertakes to reduce the weight of the imbibor in a most satisfactory and rapid manner. It is well, therefore, to remember that it is comparatively rare for fat to be in any way a condition of disease. It is a natural deposition in and around the various tissues of the body of a material which is designed both to maintain, and to provide for, the body warmth. There are some people who have the power of forming fat, while there are others who, do what they may, appear always to remain thin. And, as a general rule, it may be taken as a well-substantiated fact that the formation of fat signifies the existence of good health, while the loss of flesh is one of the most certain signs of disease. It is, therefore, most unwise to attempt to interfere with this or with any other of Nature's processes, a fact which has often been proved by the manner in which stout people who have struggled to become thin have only succeeded in reducing themselves to a pitiable condition of actual illness. Every doctor meets now-a-days with patients who have striven to improve upon Nature in this matter, and who have, in consequence, taken drugs, or adopted dietary methods with the result that if they have escaped from distinctly poisonous symptoms they have, in many instances, succeeded in ruining the action of their digestive organs for weeks or perhaps months. The best method of preventing undue obesity is to take plenty of active outdoor exercise, and to avoid starchy and fatty foods, but otherwise to follow an ordinary diet. There is one treatment to which especial objection may be taken because it is at present a popular fad—the use of thyroid extract. This has been carefully tried in France, and it has been shown that the use of the remedy is frequently followed by serious disturbances of the nervous system, and without any appreciable result in the majority of instances, so far as any permanent diminution of obesity is concerned. In some cases, indeed, the patient became extremely prostrated, and markedly ill and thinner after a short course of the remedy. But when this was discontinued and the patient recovered his usual health the condition of obesity again returned.

### CHICKEN POX.

THIS is, as is well known, so simple an affection in the vast majority of instances that it is looked upon with some degree of contempt, even by the laity, and it has often been recorded that epidemics have arisen from the fact that children suffering with the disease were permitted to go to school, or at any rate, to play about with other infants. A curious case has, however, just been published, in an Australasian contemporary, of uncomplicated chicken pox which proved fatal. Four older children of the family having had the affection, an infant, 8½ months old, was attacked, and the fever progressed in the ordinary way for three days, but on the fourth day a new crop of vesicles appeared which were so numerous that every part of the body was covered. On the seventh day, spots appeared on the tongue, the soft palate and the inside of the cheeks; on the ninth day, the vesicles changed to irritable looking ulcers, and within a few hours the child died. The doctor who reports the case, which is almost unique, considers that death was due to the large area of skin which was involved, and which caused such extreme exhaustion as to lead to the fatal result. It is probable, though the fact is not mentioned, that the infant was in an unhealthy condition when it was first attacked by the disease, and that this really led to the rapid and severe course of this usually mild affection.

### POISONING BY SULPHONAL.

AN interesting case has just been published in which a boy of 14, who took between 75 and 90 grains of sulphonal in mistake for harmless lozenges, showed symptoms of poisoning. He became very drowsy, and apparently thus the mistake was discovered. His stomach was emptied, and he then fell into a deep sleep and remained more or less unconscious for twenty-four hours. After that, he had extreme headache, weakness, giddiness, and drowsiness, and appeared to be suffering both in gait and other symptoms from alcoholic intoxication, and for more than a week he was unable to walk in the dark, from loss of muscular co-ordination. The urine was increased in quantity and of low specific gravity; but otherwise there were no marked symptoms, and recovery was finally complete. The case is very valuable because it emphasizes a fact which has already been observed, that in some people large doses of this otherwise harmless drug are apt to produce symptoms closely resembling those of ordinary intoxication, and as in this case those symptoms may be so severe as almost to endanger life. The ordinary dose

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)