

Medical Matters.



HYSTERIA.

AS knowledge increases, the asylums of ignorance one by one disappear; and therefore, many terms which are used, and which signify nothing, are gradually being discarded. This is as true in medicine as it is in other sciences, and the increasing restriction of the term "hysteria" is a conclusive proof of this fact. Formerly, and even still amongst the ignorant, those who exhibited perversions of sensation or motion for which no obvious reason was forthcoming, were straightway defined as hysterical—a convenient diagnosis which covered a multitude of symptoms. Now, however, it is shown that such cases are explicable on more scientific principles, and that functional disorders, or even temporary derangements of the blood supply of the nerve centres, sufficiently account for much that was previously obscure. Many years ago, patients suffering from "wrist-drop" were considered to be subjects of hysteria, until it was proved that they were suffering from lead-poisoning, and that this metal had this peculiar effect upon the nerves and muscles of the fore-arm. Lately, it has been shown that many cases of so-called hysteria, especially amongst men, are really due to the effects of poison. For example, alcohol is a potent cause of such nerve derangements, whilst in others the "cocaine habit" leads to similar manifestations; and, as all Nurses know, there are comparatively few patients who are not typically "hysterical" during the stage of recovery from chloroform insensibility. The writer has recently had under his care a lady who had been treated without avail for several years for hysteria, but who was in fact, and only, a morphomaniac. Under proper supervision and treatment, and complete abstinence from morphia, she regained her health, and, coincidentally, every symptom of hysteria disappeared.

SYMPHYSIOTOMY.

THIS operation continues to grow in professional favour and success. As it has already been explained in these columns, it consists of the division of the cartilage between the pubic bones, in patients whose pelvis are so deformed and contracted that

it would be impossible to deliver them, by natural means, of a fully developed child. By cutting across the cartilage, the sides of the pelvis can be appreciably separated, and thus a greater space can be secured for the passage of the child. In a very large number of instances, in which, previously, Cæsarean section would have been necessary, and the lives of the mother and child might have been therefore lost, the new operation has succeeded in saving both. A distinguished French surgeon has recently published the results which he has obtained during the past four years by this method of treatment. Sixty-nine cases of extreme pelvic deformity were operated upon. Of these, sixty-two of the mothers were saved, and sixty-one of the children; only seven mothers and eight children having died. When these results are contrasted with those obtained by other measures, and in which probably 80 per cent. of the children are lost, as well as 50 per cent. of the mothers, the immense saving of life which has been obtained by means of symphysiotomy can be realised.

MEDICAL DEFENCE.

IT is a well-known and painful fact that medical men are, from the very nature of their work, more liable to be attacked by, and are more at the mercy of, unscrupulous blackmailers than any other class or profession. For many years, individual medical men singly defended themselves against such attacks, often with disastrous financial results to themselves, even if they were successful in obtaining a verdict in a Court of Law; because too often they discovered that their antagonist was a person without means, and thus they were saddled with the full costs of the legal proceedings. As a general rule, if the case excited sufficient notice, other medical men came forward and subscribed, so as to partially or wholly defray their costs. But this at best was a most unsatisfactory arrangement, and consequently, during the last few years two Societies have been formed to defend medical men against such unjust attacks. There is now a movement in progress to bring about a fusion between these bodies, a matter of evident benefit to both, as well as to the whole medical profession. For it is manifest that it would be better to have one powerful Society than two independent, and less powerful, bodies, and it is to be hoped, therefore, that before very long this result will have been attained.

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