

Medical Matters.

CHLOROFORM FATALITIES.



OUR energetic and valuable contemporary, the *Medical Times*, is doing good service by drawing professional attention to the alarming increase in the number of deaths during, and after, chloroform administration. It has published, for some weeks past, accounts of these fatalities, collected from every part of the United Kingdom. In its last issue, no less than five such deaths were recorded, three of which, curiously enough, occurred in Yorkshire. Our contemporary points out, with much force, that under the old-fashioned methods of administration a very few drops of chloroform sufficed to induce profound insensibility, and that operators formerly were accustomed to give the drug sprinkled on a handkerchief, and therefore freely mixed with air. By this means, the blood was impregnated with vapour much more slowly, and in much diminished quantities, as compared with the effect produced by modern inhalers. These, it is well known, sometimes employ a large amount of chloroform; and while, on the one hand, there is no doubt that the patient is more rapidly brought under the influence of the drug, so, on the other, there is reason to believe that considerably more chloroform is inhaled than is necessary to secure insensibility. It is therefore suggested that the amount of chloroform, given, should be accurately measured out; and that, practically, only drops should be used where at present whole drachms are employed—the result being that while the patient will be somewhat less rapidly rendered unconscious, his safety will be secured to a corresponding degree. There is much reason to believe, however, that the method of administration is not the only matter at fault, and that a more stringent inquiry should be made, in all cases, into the perfect purity of the chloroform which is employed. It is well known that the commercial article is frequently adulterated, and it is at least possible that this adulteration may, in some measure, be the cause of the fatal accidents which have occurred. It is consoling, however, to remember not only that ether is the anæsthetic most generally used, but also that accidents from this drug are exceedingly rare.

THE PASTEUR INSTITUTE.

THERE have been recently published the results obtained at the Pasteur Institute, last year, in the treatment of patients who had been bitten, or who had been supposed to have been bitten, by mad dogs. The figures are sufficiently remarkable. During the year, 1,520 persons were treated, and two died. Of these, 122 were bitten by animals who were proved by direct experiment to be suffering from rabies; 949 by animals declared by veterinary surgeons to be mad; and 449 by animals which were only suspected of being mad. If, then, we put the last class out of court altogether, and regard half of the second class as equally doubtful, it still leaves at least 600 persons who might, under ordinary circumstances, have exhibited hydrophobic symptoms, but who have apparently not developed the disease. Of course these facts and figures are received in the scientific world with considerable caution; because, after all, there is a large amount of hypothetical probability about them. The patients, treated, might never have developed hydrophobia at all. There is no proof that they would have done so, and it is a well ascertained fact that many persons bitten by dogs, which were undoubtedly mad, have never shown any subsequent ill effects from the accident.

MEDICINE IN JAPAN.

THE Imperial University of Japan has just published its Calendar for 1895, which proves that in science, as in other matters, Japan can claim to be one of the most progressive nations in the world. It shows that no less than 175 medical students were in attendance, and that their course of study is as complete as that required from their contemporaries in Europe. Their laboratories are most perfectly fitted with every modern scientific apparatus, and the reputation attained by Professor Kitasato in microscopical and bacterial researches is deservedly world-wide. It is not more than ten years ago that English schools of medicine possessed Japanese students, sent here, at the expense of their Government, to acquire European methods of medical treatment; but now it would seem that the University of Japan and the Hospitals which are rising up in every part of that country, will be well able in future to provide for the training of their own medical practitioners.

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