

Medical Matters.

NIGHT TERRORS.



THIS term has been applied chiefly to the attacks of "terror" to which some children are subject during the night. As a rule, those who thus suffer are between two and eight years of age, for this trouble is comparatively rarely found in older or younger children.

In a large percentage of the cases, there is some well marked family history of nerve disease—for example, epilepsy or mania—whilst amongst the other children of the family those who do not suffer from "night terrors" often exhibit some other nerve disease, such as infantile paralysis or St. Vitus's dance. It is by no means uncommon for an attack of convulsions to precede any manifestation of these "night terrors," and the occurrence itself is usually well marked. The child is heard to utter a sudden agonised scream, and is found sitting up in bed, or perhaps even hidden under the bed or behind some other piece of furniture, wide awake, but apparently only semi-conscious of his surroundings. The face is usually flushed, the heart is beating with extreme rapidity, the eyes are widely open and staring, the lips parted, the nostrils dilated, the whole attitude that of extreme terror. Sometimes the child is excitedly talking to some person or thing which he fancies that he can see; and it is a curious circumstance that, in the great majority of cases, the vision thus seen by the child is of a red or scarlet colour. As a general rule, the child always has the same dream, or sees the same vision, in every attack, even if many months elapse between the various seizures; just as, in older people, mental disorders, overwork, over-anxiety, or even indigestion, always produces one similar dream. The treatment of these "night terrors" is based on common sense. The immediate need is to place the child again in bed and soothe him to sleep. In most instances, he does not recognise during the seizure those who are about him, and on being laid down usually sinks into a deep sleep, and in the morning has little or no recollection of what occurred during the night—in this, exhibiting one more proof of the close alliance between this affection and Epilepsy. These attacks should never be made light of, because if they

persist they frequently end in other nerve manifestations, and it is by no means unusual to find even Insanity the ultimate result. The medicinal means which are used usually consist of bromides and some tonic, but the Nurse can do much by keeping the child lightly yet warmly covered while sleeping, by careful attention to the regulation of the excretions, and careful avoidance of anything which may excite the nervous system.

PARAFFIN LAMPS.

IT is a well-known fact that the great majority of cases of burns are due to the bursting of lighted lamps, and the report which has been recently ordered by, and made to, the London County Council, concerning the causes of petroleum lamp accidents, is therefore very valuable. Over 100 kinds of lamps have been investigated, and it has been, at any rate, conclusively proved that the cheaper kinds are frequently unsafe, and that accidents could be largely prevented by the adoption of safety burners. In no less than 167 out of 180 recorded explosions the reservoirs were of glass or china; in only twelve cases were they of metal. This fact is of incalculable importance, not only in defining the elements of danger, but also in suggesting the essential precautions which should be taken. It also goes far to prove that the constitution of the lamp, and especially of its reservoir, is more important than the exact composition of the oil which it consumes; because while some illuminants are certainly more explosive than others, the danger of the latter to the purveyor himself is so great that their comparatively low price does not compensate him for the risk. Consequently, it should not pay the ordinary oilman, as an article of commerce, to sell, and therefore to keep, such dangerous oils. The chief remedy for lamp accidents will probably be found in the substitution of metal reservoirs for glass or china; and in the adoption of a burner which will prevent the extreme heating of the oil, and, therefore, of its explosive vapour. One practical point to remember is, that where an explosion takes place and burning oil is scattered about the floor, this can only be effectually put out either by being covered up with sand, or by some strong and not easily inflammable material, such as a thick rug. To throw water on burning oil only spreads the conflagration.

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