

Medical Matters.

RHEUMATIC FEVER.



THE great success which now attends the treatment of acute rheumatism, as compared with the lengthy, and often most unsatisfactory, methods of former times, is probably largely due to the employment of Salicylates. The fact that the disease is due to a specific microbe is now very generally held, and the antiseptic qualities of the Witch Hazel is perhaps the true explanation of its extreme usefulness in these cases. An important practical point for Nurses to remember, is that the drug often exercises an extremely depressing influence, and that this effect upon the heart's action is evidenced, first by nausea, and then by vomiting. They will probably always receive instructions from the doctor as to reducing the quantity of, or discontinuing the drug, under such circumstances, and that in case of faintness or actual syncope occurring, stimulants must at once be given. It must, at any rate, never be forgotten that patients who are taking this remedy, whether for rheumatism or some other complaint, require to be very carefully watched, so that any signs of heart failure may at once be detected, and that the measures prescribed by the doctor for such an eventuality, may be immediately carried out. The nausea is very often a danger signal, which demands and receives the attention of the well-trained Nurse.

SAW ACCIDENTS.

IN the Southern States of America, where cotton mills abound, there are large numbers of accidents caused by the "gin" machines, as they are called. These are practically steel saws, moving by machinery, and if any part of the clothing of the workers is caught in the revolving instruments, the hand and arm may be immediately dragged under the cutting edge. The manifest danger is probably greater owing to the lack of legislative protection, such as is given to labour in this country; and the carelessness of the negro, and even of the white workman, completes the probability of serious accidents. It is, therefore, not surprising to find, in our American contemporaries, papers dealing with the best methods of treatment of these injuries. They have been graphically described as follows:—"The

peculiarities of these wounds are—their number, usually from a half dozen to a score, parallel with each other diagonally across the fingers, palmar surface of hand, and the inner side of the fore-arm—it is rare, indeed, that the injury is to the back of the hand and arm; in fact this region usually escapes injury, while the inner side of the hand and arm are ginned into mincemeat. By reason of the circular shape of the saw, the wound is much deeper at its centre than if made with a straight-edged instrument. Every cut is a deep, ragged, bloody chasm; the walls on each side are composed of hanging shreds of flesh, the débris of torn blood vessels, tendons, &c. Closely intermingling therewith are lint, fragments of cotton, seed, hulls, bones, &c." This description is equally applicable to the similar, if less frequent, accidents which occur in saw mills in this country. It is, therefore, most interesting to learn the method in which these cases are successfully treated across the Atlantic. The ordinary antiseptics, such as carbolic acid, the perchloride of mercury, or iodoform, are not used, because it has been found that absorption from these deep wounds is rapid, and that poisonous symptoms have therefore often followed the employment of even dilute solutions of these drugs. All bleeding is stopped, the fingers and the wounded surfaces are cleaned carefully, and are then wrapped up in lint, freely soaked in castor oil, the limb then being bandaged on to a splint, so as to keep the parts at perfect rest. During the period of shock, which is often so extreme as to be fatal, no attempt is made to operate, however necessary this may ultimately be. American surgeons very shrewdly say, "Never amputate at once. If your patient would die without operation, he will the more certainly die with it. He is suffering from shock. Amputation will not cure that; it will do no more than substitute a clean wound for a jagged one." They take the ordinary means, therefore, to revive the patient as speedily as possible, and then, if necessary, surgical measures can be taken. But the treatment of these wounds by castor oil, and the great success, which is attributed to its use in bringing about quick recovery, is a practical point which is well worth remembering.

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 From the sweet-scented Island of Ceylon.

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