

ease of the spinal cord producing, in fact, precisely the same loss of control over the muscles, which follows upon alcoholic poisoning. It used to be thought that these patients suffered from weakness, but it is a fact of much importance which can be easily proved while such a case is lying on a couch, that the strength of the muscles is as great as usual. The whole failure, therefore, is due, not to muscular feebleness, but to the fact that messages are sent irregularly through the injured nerve centres to the different muscles, and so the latter do not work together. The loss of control spreads gradually from the muscles of the lower limbs to those of the upper, and to the still important muscles of the chest and heart; and so the breathing is interfered with, and the heart becomes gravely disturbed in its vital action. Meanwhile, the various functions of the body suffer a gradual impairment also, and fail in their ability to nourish and support the system. The Nursing of these, and similar cases is, as a rule, of a very depressing character, because the progress of events is almost invariably downwards, and the patient suffers naturally both from irritability and despondency in consequence of the gradual decay of his powers. It is, therefore, of the first importance that the nurse should maintain a cheerful and hopeful demeanour, and thus assist to lighten the patient's melancholy. Very often, the case terminates by some intercurrent disease, such, for example, as bronchitis, or some bladder affection. The nurse can do a great deal to make the patient's life more endurable by diminishing his depression and by preventing the formation of bed-sores or the occurrence of chills and colds.

In other chronic diseases, such for example as epilepsy, the duties of the nurse are more active. The patient has to be incessantly watched to prevent, if possible, any injury resulting during a seizure. He may be seized, for example, at any moment by a fit, and falling down, may injure himself seriously. For instance, such patients have been known to fall in the middle of a crowded street, and to be run over with fatal results; or, on the other hand, cases have occurred in which they have been left to themselves in a room, and have fallen upon the fire, or under the water in a bath; being burnt to death or drowned. It is necessary to mention these facts in order to emphasise the necessity for constant care and watchfulness and a ne-

cessity which, unfortunately, experience shows is not always understood or remembered even by well-trained nurses.

(To be continued.)

Medical Matters.

PRURITUS.



THIS, the technical term applied to cases of itching, is one of the most distressing symptoms from which a patient can suffer. The irritation in certain skin diseases is so extreme that it not only prevents sleep, but in time exercises a most depressing influence upon the nervous system. In eczema, for example, the pruritus is often very severe, and most of the drugs in the Pharmacopœia have been used in vain for its relief. Within the last few years, however, the antiseptic system has led to improvements in the treatment of such cases which could hardly have been hoped for. Many patients, for example, are relieved by prolonged immersion of the affected part in hot water, and attacks of eczema which have resisted all treatment, and which have rendered the patient's life almost unbearable, have been cured by keeping him in a bath for some hours a day, or even for several days at a time; the crusts and scales being washed off, and the surrounding tissues softened and rendered more healthy. Then again, the use of carbolic acid, in the form of either lotion or ointment, has often given results of the most satisfactory nature, after all ordinary treatment has been tried without effect. The same antiseptic principle has been employed in the use of an American ointment, composed of Resinol, which has been found not only antiseptic, but also anæsthetic. This is especially useful in children, in whom pruritus often assumes its most distressing and intractable aspect, sometimes causing the child to tear its skin, from the torment it endures; and thus thickening of the tissues is caused to such an extent that healing is made more difficult than ever. It is in children also that the bath affords the best results, but it is a practical point of considerable importance so far as the latter is concerned that the nurse should remember that a warm bath exercises a most sedative effect, and that children are very prone to go

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