

Medical Matters.

DIET AND BACILLI.



SOME remarkable experiments have recently been carried out by well known French observers upon the effects of diet on the action of certain toxins. They have found that, when animals were starved, injections of diphtheria and pneumonia bacilli took effect much more slowly than was the case when the animals had been well fed; and even when the poison caused the disease, the latter showed itself in a much milder form than was produced by the same poison in animals that had not been starved. These results have been confirmed by subsequent investigations, and it is stated that they have been found to be invariable. The natural question has arisen as to the cause of these results, and it has been suggested that in a badly nourished body, the bacilli of these, and probably of other, diseases do not find the special nutriment which they require for their growth and development, and thus, so to speak, are also starved out. The argument that human beings attacked by such bacilli should also be starved, which would seem to be the natural lesson to be learned from these facts, could hardly be inculcated as a matter of routine practice, because we have not yet arrived at the point where it can be admitted that the bacilli and not the patient are to be entirely considered.

BACTERIA IN INK.

It is a well known fact that a slight scratch with an inky pen often results in the formation of a troublesome abscess or sore at the site of the trivial injury. The explanation of this circumstance has recently been discovered by a German physiologist, who has examined sixty-seven specimens of ink used in various schools, and who has found that the majority were made with gall-nuts or other chemical preparations, none of which were capable of producing blood-poisoning. But, in the great majority of these samples, various well known bacilli were present in large numbers; and in one case a cultivation of these bacilli injected into mice gave rise to rapidly fatal pyæmia. There is, at any rate, reason to believe that

these bacteria must have gained admission to the ink in consequence of the fluid being left uncovered. The natural precaution, therefore, should be taken of keeping ink in well stoppered bottles, and in the case of any infectious disease occurring in a house, all the ink in open receptacles should always be thrown away as soon as possible. By these means, therefore, ink should cease to possess the irritating, if not the dangerous, qualities it now sometimes exhibits when applied below the human skin. It will always at least retain its proverbial influence as a mental irritant of the first order.

THE NAUHEIM TREATMENT.

FOR many years, medical men have recognised the fact that certain affections of the muscular tissue of the heart can be best treated by improving, so far as possible, the nutrition and power of that muscle. For at least forty years, it has been recommended to patients suffering from dilatation of the heart to take a regulated diet and a well regulated course of physical exercise. During the last few years, this old-fashioned and common sense treatment has been exploited by a few persons as though it were a new and marvellous discovery; and there is little doubt that in the hands of some, at any rate, the treatment has degenerated into a form of unmitigated quackery. It has certainly been most elaborately exploited in this country; and results with which every physiologist and heart specialist is familiar, that is to say, the gradual increase in the strength of the heart's action and a decided diminution in the size of a dilated heart—due to increased strength of its muscular tissue—has been discussed and described—especially by gentlemen who had previously had little or no experience on the subject—as though some miraculous curative change was being effected by the physician, instead of the process being a perfectly natural one. We are glad to learn that the public is now awakening to the fact that those who claim credit for such results must possess more self-assurance than knowledge; and in due time the treatment by modified exercises will probably once more be recognised as one which is suitable for many cases of heart degeneration, about which there is no mystery, and which any medical practitioner is perfectly able to advise and direct.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)