

## Medical Matters.



### CEREBRO-SPINAL FEVER.

A READER has asked us for information regarding this serious complaint. It is known by different names in different countries. For example, as the Black Sickness in Dublin, as Cerebral Typhus in Germany, while in France it is called Epidemic Meningitis. It is undoubtedly epidemic; that is to say, one case is usually followed by others in the same neighbourhood, and it is comparatively rare to find one case alone. It seems specially to affect young soldiers, and some of the worst epidemics have occurred in Dublin amongst the recruits of the Royal Irish Constabulary. Amongst children, both boys and girls are equally affected, and it is most commonly met with amongst those below ten years of age. It occurs more frequently in men than in women, and generally between the ages of fifteen and thirty, while it is rarely, if ever, found after forty years of age. It does not seem to be influenced by general sanitary conditions, and, so far, no special microbe has been discovered to which the disease can be assigned. It appears to follow some excessive fatigue, and in children almost always arises after some exhausting game or excitement. The patient is usually attacked suddenly, when apparently in perfect health, by faintness, vomiting of greenish matter, and extreme pain, usually at the back of the head and neck, the hands and feet become cold, the patient usually becomes insensible and sometimes violently convulsed, and then appears to pass into a condition of collapse. On recovering consciousness, pain in the head and spine is generally complained of, and the body becomes arched, as in cases of lockjaw, and rests on the back of the head and the heels. In many cases, an eruption appears during the first twenty-four hours, first on the legs, consisting of black spots slightly raised and feeling like shots under the skin. These are undoubtedly little effusions of blood, and their extent shows the intensity of the disease. Sometimes little vesicles form on the skin, first filled with watery fluid, and afterwards with blood. The patient often dies in a state of collapse; but if reaction sets in the temperature rises to 103°

or 104°, or even to 107° Fahr. Inflammation of one or both eyes frequently occurs, and it is a curious fact that the right eye is then almost invariably affected. The mortality of the disease is very great. Different observers place it at from 60 to 80 per cent. of those attacked. It is most fatal when the patient is about twenty years of age, and less so in childhood than amongst adults. Mild cases, which are generally those occurring at the end of an epidemic, usually recover in from three to six weeks. Dangerous cases, especially those occurring at the commencement of an epidemic, terminate fatally in the first three days. The nursing is very important, and consists largely in the careful and frequent administrations of food and stimulants, in the application of heat in the stage of collapse, and of counter-irritants to the neck and spine for the relief of pain.

### MASSAGE.

A CORRESPONDENT has asked for information with regard to massage and especially as to the possibility of such a treatment having an injurious effect. It is recommended for the purpose of passively exercising the muscles of a patient who is confined to bed, so as to prevent the wasting of the tissues which always follows on disuse. The masseuse, in fact, exercises the muscles instead of the patient doing so, the result being that in many nerve cases the patient is able to be kept at perfect rest in bed, and at the same time her muscular system is braced up and the circulation through the limbs is maintained in full activity. A further advantage of the method is that the patient is able to digest larger quantities of nutritious food when massage is employed than would be tolerated by the stomach if she were confined to bed without any muscular exercise. The combination of forced feeding with massage has proved so successful in many patients suffering from nerve exhaustion, that it is known, by the name of the American specialist who introduced it, as the Weir-Mitchell treatment. But there are many cases in which massage, especially of the abdomen, is very harmful. Patients suffering from uterine or ovarian complaints are frequently made much worse by the kneading and rubbing of the abdomen employed in the treatment, and therefore, medical men usually take the greatest care to ascertain that no such disease is present before massage is recommended by them.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)