

## Medical Matters.

### THE PREMATURELY BORN.



THE care of prematurely-born infants has been greatly improved during recent years; and especially in Paris and New York the subject has received very considerable attention. Only twenty years ago, it was generally admitted as a fact that 80 per cent. of infants born before full term, died. The reason for this was recognised many years ago, and described as due to inability on the part of the infant to maintain the necessary bodily heat. Consequently, the first efforts that were made to save such children, consisted in wrapping them up in cotton wool and keeping them in cradles surrounded by hot water bottles. Then, there came the invention of a Bordeaux physician, who constructed a tub with double walls, the interstices being filled with hot water; but while some were saved, many infants died in consequence of the difficulty of maintaining the temperature and properly purifying the air. In Germany, Austria, and France, numerous inventions followed on the same lines, all of which succeeded up to a certain extent; until finally a Marseilles physician invented a box made of metal and warmed to a regulated temperature by hot air. Professor Lyons' apparatus has been generally adopted now throughout France, and has been introduced with most successful results into America. The prematurely-born infant is placed, immediately after its birth, in the metal case, and the process of incubation is, so to speak, continued. The result has been that the death-rate of these children has been reduced from the former average of 80 per cent. to as low as 17 per cent. at the present time. It is, after all, a treatment based upon both physiology and common sense, and deserves the great success which it has obtained.

### MOVEABLE KIDNEY.

THERE seems reason to believe that this affection is one in which the laity are taking much interest, probably because it is somewhat of a novelty to them. The affection itself is very simple, and consists in a relaxation of the ligaments and tissues around the kidney, especially the ordinary deposit of fat. It is,

therefore, more common to meet with the complaint amongst persons who are very thin. The kidney may move several inches forward into the abdomen, or fall towards the pelvis to the same extent; and by its displacement it causes a sensation of dragging and extreme weariness or aching upon the affected side. It is only within the last few years, comparatively speaking, that the affection has been clearly recognised, and many cases require very careful examination for their discovery. With the displacement of the organ it is easy to understand that there is frequently more or less interference with its functions, and with the proper flow of blood through its vessels. Then treatment becomes more imperative. In many cases, the condition causes so little pain and even inconvenience that it may altogether escape attention and require no active treatment. When the displacement is very considerable, and the symptoms somewhat urgent, the ordinary method adopted, at the present time, is to perform an operation with the object of drawing the kidney back into its proper position and stitching it to the surrounding tissues. By this means, firm adhesions are formed which maintain the organ permanently in its place. Performed under antiseptic conditions, the operation is regarded as almost free from risk, and it is certainly, in the majority of cases, very successful in its results.

### FRACTURED PATELLA.

THE accident which has befallen the Prince of Wales has not only aroused universal regret and sympathy for the illustrious patient, but has naturally drawn public attention to the causes and conditions of a form of fracture which is comparatively infrequent. Most nurses are aware that the knee-cap is a small bone of flattened oval shape, designed to protect the knee-joint from injury, and firmly attached to the tendon of the great muscles on the front of the thigh, which, passing over the knee, is fixed into the larger bone of the leg. With this anatomical knowledge, it is easy to understand how a violent strain upon those muscles, when the knee is bent, can snap the knee-cap across, just as a twig is snapped across one's knee; and with the muscles dragging the upper fragment away from the lower, it is easy to comprehend why it is so extremely difficult to keep the broken edges together, and secure firm union of the fracture.

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