

Medical Matters.

CHECKING A COLD.



A GERMAN physician has recently reported his conviction that an incipient cold in the head can be checked if the nose is thoroughly rinsed out with a weak (pale pink) solution of potassium permanganate, which seems to have a specific action upon the germs of coryza. It checks cold in the first hour or so. After blowing the nose vigorously, both nostrils are well rinsed out with the solution, the fluid being allowed to run out through the other nostril and through the mouth. Each nostril is wiped out with a cotton wool plug. A small dry plug of cotton is then pushed well up into each nostril, and the nostrils are filled with the weak solution, with the head held back, the cotton being allowed to soak it up. The plug is left undisturbed for about an hour, when it can be expelled by blowing the nose. Even an established cold, it is said, is favourably influenced by this treatment, but it is most effective when the sneezing, tickling, and increased secretion announce the onset of the attack.

HAIR BALLS.

THESE are found from time to time in the stomach or intestines of those who have died from various diseases. Sometimes, they are so large as to cause symptoms of active obstruction of the bowels. At other times they set up so much intestinal irritation and disease that operative measures become necessary. A case of hair-ball in the stomach, successfully removed by gastrotomy, has recently been reported. It was that of a woman, aged twenty-two, who had a painful tumour in the left flank. Three attacks of violent pain occurred; the swelling was then found to be larger. The stomach was opened, and a mass weighing two pounds, consisting of closely felted hair, was removed. It was then ascertained that the girl was accustomed to bite the end of her hair when a child. Hair balls are common amongst cattle and mad dogs, both given to licking of their fur. In the human species most of the patients are women, and in a large proportion they are insane. Still, some bite their hair and swallow bits merely as a trick or habit; and others have done so for various imaginary benefits. One believed that swallowing hair was good for the voice; another habitually moistened cow hair, with

which she worked, with her mouth. The hair becomes amalgamated together by the action of the stomach, and the mass may lie for many years in the organ without causing any bad symptoms. Such a concretion has been known to weigh over five pounds. Sometimes part or all of the mass passes into the intestine, and is voided. Diagnosis is only possible when a movable tumour is detected in the region of the stomach and a history of hair biting is obtained. Whilst sometimes the hair does no harm, as a rule it sets up great gastric irritation; about half the cases died of perforation of the bowel and then peritonitis. Hence operation usually follows the diagnosis of the condition.

EAR COUGH.

IT is a well-known and important practical fact that cough can be produced by nerve irritation at some point far removed from the throat or chest. Such cases are often very obscure, and, of course, no treatment is effectual until the cause of the trouble has been discovered, and can be removed. A case in point was recently reported in the Press. It was that of a girl, aged sixteen, who had for three weeks a most distressing cough which had come on suddenly. It was peculiarly harsh and resonant, and more like the bark of a large dog than a sound emanating from a human being. It was incessant except for very short intervals between the attacks, and abated only during sleep. There were no expectoration, no pain, and no fever. The girl had had a discharge from the right ear since her infancy. The lungs were apparently free from all abnormal sounds. The nose and the post-nasal space were normal. The pharynx, the mouth, the larynx, and the trachea were healthy, and rather pale. In the whole respiratory tract there was nothing to account for the cough. There was a large bright red granular polypus in the right ear which completely obscured the membrane. It was removed under cocaine, and much coughing occurred during the necessary manipulation of the ear. An antiseptic wash and a bromide mixture were ordered. The cough ceased for the next two days, but returned in a modified form, being less frequent and less severe. The site of the polypus was very red and inflamed, and much pus was pouring from the ear. After cleansing the parts, chromic acid (four grains to the ounce) was applied to them and the wash was continued. On the next day the cough was much less; and it entirely ceased within a week.

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