

Medical Matters.

THE MARRIAGE OF NEAR RELATIVES.



In a recent number of a contemporary, Mr. Jonathan Hutchinson discusses the important question of the marriages of first-cousins, maintaining that, under ordinary circumstances, the children of such unions are in no way physically inferior to others. It does not appear to be the fact that idiot or deaf and dumb asylums are disproportionately peopled by the offspring of consanguineous marriages, and in many isolated communities in which more or less close inter-marriage of relatives has been practised for centuries, there are found individuals who, so far as physical vigour is concerned, are all that could be desired. Mr. Hutchinson, in fact, considers that there is nothing in the marriage of relatives which of necessity leads towards deterioration. The forces at work are merely those of inheritance, and may as certainly conduce to the transmission of sound health as of the reverse. There is, naturally, in the marriage of first cousins, an increased probability that, whatever tendencies exist in the family will appear in the offspring. Although the stock-breeder's experience is generally supposed to be adverse to consanguineous unions, it really only illustrates the fact just stated. Much of the in-and-in breeding has been carried on with the intention of perpetuating and increasing vigorous healthy qualities. Thus, for several generations it may be successful, but a too long continuance may imperil fecundity or cause defect. Mr. Hutchinson refers to a question, often asked of the general practitioner, concerning consanguineous marriages. He is consulted, for example, as to the result of the union of first-cousins for one generation. According to Hutchinson, the answer should be:—"There is nothing likely to be prejudicial in a consanguineous marriage *per se*, but if there be in the family any definite tendency to such diseases as tubercle, cancer, or insanity, there is a risk that it may be intensified. On the other hand, if the family has a good life-history, then there may be greater security in such a marriage than in one with a stranger whose antecedents may probably be less well-known." Even when facts as to disease are known, the adviser should keep

well within the bounds of what is reasonable, and not attempt counsels of perfection. Like every human affair, marriage involves unavoidable risks. In his assertion that in the marriage of first-cousins the risk is only that of the transmission of disease and not of its creation, he makes, however, one reservation, namely, with regard to those rare maladies called "family diseases," such as retinitis pigmentosa, Friedreich's paralysis, ichthyosis, etc. But the occurrence even of these may be explained on the principles of heredity rather than on the supposition of their origin in consanguinity.

NASAL ANÆMIA.

Charbory has lately drawn attention to anæmia resulting from nasal disease. Partial or complete nasal occlusion may affect blood integrity in the following ways: 1. Nasal obstruction which lessens the amount of air gaining access to the lungs thereby restricts hæmatisation, and prevents the proper formation and elaboration of the red blood corpuscles. 2. Buccal respiration, which but incompletely replaces nasal respiration, causes the air to reach the lungs without undergoing the normal physiological changes. 3. Epistaxis. 4. Mucous and muco-purulent discharges from the nasal mucous membrane may be abundant, and, by their continuance, may produce a drain on the system. 5. Fever, due to infection and inflammations of the nasal mucous membrane. 6. Malignant tumours of the nose; and 7. Troubles of the respiratory and digestive systems, and nervous trouble secondary to nasal affections.

SUTURING THE HEART.

It is a well-known fact that wounds of the heart are not always fatal at once. Fischer collected 376 cases of heart wound, with a mortality of only twenty per cent. of cases dying two to three minutes after injury, and cases have been noted in which a fatal result did not occur until nine months after the wound. Dr. Del Vecchio has lately been carrying out some experiments on dogs, from the results of which he concludes that suture of the heart in cases of wound is possible. At the congress held at Rome, he showed a dog whose left ventricle had been wounded in two places forty days previously. Both injuries had been sutured with catgut and silk, and, when exhibited, the animal was apparently in perfect health.

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