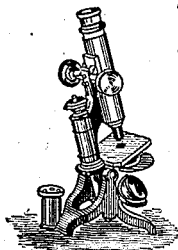


Medical Matters.

AN IMPROVED METHOD OF APPLYING THE TREATMENT OF FINSSEN.



The Paris correspondent of the *Lancet* states that the treatment of lupus by photo-therapeusis, after the method of Finsen, has been adopted in Paris as in other scientific centres of Europe. There is one set of apparatus in working order at the St. Louis Hospital, the great French school of dermatology, and another is at work in a private dermatological institute. There are, however, two grave obstacles in the way of applying this treatment in a widespread manner, one being the length of time necessary and the other the expense. Each sitting lasts one hour, and requires the attendance of a specially trained nurse for each patient. A great step in advance has, however, been taken by means of the apparatus devised by M. Lorted and M. Genoud of Lyons. M. Gastou has just given a set to the French Society of Dermatology and Syphilography. The apparatus is based on the same lines as that of Finsen, but is much more powerful, and the condensers necessary in Finsen's apparatus have been done away with by intercepting the luminous rays as near their point of origin as possible. As in Finsen's apparatus, there is a special arrangement for cooling the rays. The results are superior to any hitherto attained. It is possible to affect an area almost double that formerly operated upon and the photo-chemical intensity of the rays is so great that the time of exposure necessary is reduced from one hour to 15 minutes. Besides the economy in attendants which this brings about it must be noted that Finsen's apparatus required a current of from 60 to 80 ampères, which is not to be met with everywhere, while the new apparatus only requires a current of 10 or 12 ampères, which the ordinary electric-light mains can easily supply. These important improvements will allow the light treatment to be much more generally used than heretofore. Its results are, without doubt remarkable, but up to now the expense attendant on the treatment has precluded its general application.

The light treatment is based on the three principles:—

1. That the chemical rays of the sun or of

the electric light can produce an inflammation of the skin.

2. That they can produce an effect through the skin.

3. That they can kill microbes on, in, or close under the skin.

LUPUS VULGARIS.

We are glad to learn that mainly through the liberality of the Chairman, Mr. William Charles Jones, the Manchester and Salford Hospital for Skin Diseases has been enabled to take up its share of the work and proceed with the building and equipment of a new department for treatment (as in the London Hospital) by both the Finsen light rays and the Röntgen "X" rays. It is now nearly completed, and will probably be ready within a few weeks. In this connection Mr. H. G. Brooke, a member of the staff, wisely informs the public that they are doomed to disappointment if they take the expression, the "light cure for skin diseases," too literally. The word "cure," which means simply a method of treatment, and is always used in that sense abroad, has by some ill chance been perverted in this country to denoting the result of a successful treatment. *Lupus vulgaris*, the disease for which the Finsen light treatment has hitherto been almost exclusively employed, is the result of the action of the tubercle bacillus (a very minute, microscopic fungus) on the tissues of the body. It attacks primarily the skin or mucous membranes, and may lead finally to the destruction of the underlying bones—or *vice versa*. If the part which it is attacking can be exposed directly and under pressure to the action of the rays, the power of the bacillus can be arrested or destroyed, but if these parts are hidden away where the rays cannot act directly, as is often the case in the recesses of the mouth and nose, then other methods must of necessity be substituted, and neither certainty nor painlessness can be assured. If all cases of lupus vulgaris, or other tuberculoses of the skin, could be treated early by the Finsen light rays we might hope to "cure with certainty and without pain;" but no one who has any experience, or even imagination, would promise a miraculous or even painless "cure" to the poor sufferers whose flesh and bones have been infected for years by an insidious and destructive microbe. And the last person to claim this for the light rays would be the modest and learned inventor of the method himself.

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