

Medical Matters.

THE TREATMENT OF BURNS.



In details, hardly a year passes without some new method being recommended as the best possible treatment for burns. Zinc ointment, Carron oil, and other old-fashioned remedies are supposed to have had their day, but, doubtless, in the surgical cycle, will, in due course, re-appear and be vaunted once more as the application *par excellence*. As to the first principles of excluding the air as speedily and as completely as possible from any burnt surface, and, when it is dressed, exposing as small an area as possible at the same time, there can, of course, be no change because these are founded upon physiological and surgical facts of well-known truth. One of the latest methods of treating burns is that which has been somewhat extensively tried, and is now confidently recommended by Dr. Tillaux, at the Charité Hospital in Paris. It consists in the application to the burnt surfaces of compresses of tarlatane soaked in a half per cent. solution of Picric acid, and then squeezed nearly dry. This is said to allay pain and expedite healing in a very marked manner. There is certainly a delightful simplicity about the remedy which is not without its charm, but the same praise will, perhaps, hardly be accorded to the discolouration of the affected parts which is caused by the acid; for these, it is stated, not only become of a deep yellow tinge, but of a colour which persists for some length of time. Whether the remedy would not appear to many people to be somewhat worse than the disease, is, at least, open to question. It is stated that the acid causes no irritation, and that no poisonous symptoms have been observed during or after its use, and that the dressing need, as a rule, when the wounds keep healthy, to be renewed at first every three days, and then every four, five, or six days. Altogether the advantages seem sufficiently great to warrant a trial of the remedy, especially as means might be discovered to prevent the affected surfaces being discoloured by the remedy, as well as disfigured by the accident.

THE CURE OF THE MORPHIA HABIT.

It has been known, for a great many years, that the most rapid and effectual antidote in opium poisoning consisted of the injection of atropine under the skin. This fact has recently been used successfully in treating a patient suffering from that most difficult of diseases the Morphia habit. As might have been expected, the injection of atropine quickly arrested the profuse secretion from the

skin, bronchi, and intestines, and at the same time not only prevented the unpleasant effects which are always experienced by the patient habituated to the use of Morphia from whom it is suddenly withheld, but also, to a considerable extent, seemed to prevent the craving for the drug which is almost invariably found in these cases. One-three hundredth part of a grain of the sulphate of atropine was the dose employed, the patient being watched with great care for some hours in order to obviate any untoward symptoms. It is needless to add that Atropine has to be given with great care, and shows the best results when employed as an antidote to a recent dose of the Morphia poison.

QUININE IN AGUE.

The importance and usefulness of Quinine as a treatment for malaria has been known and utilized in practical medicine for a great many years. Recent observations tend to prove that the action of the drug depends upon its direct effect on the causes of the disease, and not, as formerly was considered the case, upon the nervous system of the patient. It is well known now that malaria, like other similar diseases, has its specific bacillus. In cases, therefore, in which the Quinine, when taken by the mouth, failed to cure the patient, it has been found that injections of a solution of quinine into the veins has had the desired result, a fact which certainly goes to prove not only the existence of the bacillus in the blood, but also of the other fact to which we have alluded, that quinine exerts a directly destructive effect upon the germ in question.

INJECTIONS OF ARSENIC.

One of the greatest drawbacks to the employment of Arsenic as a drug is the disagreeable results which its internal administration sometimes causes upon the stomach and intestines by setting up irritability, if not a low inflammatory condition, in the digestive tract. To obviate this, a Russian Physician strongly recommends that arsenic should be given by means of injections under the skin, and from a number of experiments which he has made, he is able to assert with confidence that the results of the drug are equally good by this method as when administered by the mouth, and, furthermore, that when used under the skin, arsenic has little or no effect upon the digestive system. It may be said that there is nothing very new in this, nor, on the other hand, has there been anything very new in any other therapeutical discoveries which have been made; but, as a matter of practical fact, there can be no doubt that arsenic has hitherto not been used so extensively as a hypodermic, as the safety of its use in this manner would now seem to indicate.

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