

Medical Matters.

FREE TRADE IN POISON.



It is rapidly becoming a question of the greatest public importance as to the means which must be devised in order to prevent the facilities with which poison can now be obtained. It is well known that, by law, chemists are compelled to take considerable precautions as to whom and how they sell opium, ergot, and other poisonous substances. But there are other equally dangerous drugs which can be obtained wholesale with the greatest ease; but amongst these, perhaps, carbolic acid holds the chief place, because of the many and valuable uses to which it is at present placed. The result, however, has been that cases of poisoning by its various preparations are becoming of extreme frequency, and the number of instances in which its internal administration, through accident, has caused death, are even more frequent still. It, therefore, is a matter which the legislature must speedily consider—the methods by which it will be possible to increase the stringency of the Sale of Poisons' Act. Closely connected with this is the cognate question of the sale of patent medicines, many of which are known to contain poisonous ingredients, and some to such an extent as to clearly bring them within the class of poisons. It has, therefore, been argued with great force for some years past, that such medicines should not be sold under the Government Licence, but should be restricted as all other poisons are, and dispensed under similar conditions to the public. Some of the soothing syrups for children are the undoubted cause of a large number of infantile deaths every year, and it is well known that they contain as their active constituent some form of opium, the action of which upon children is extraordinarily potent. Until such an Act is passed, and the sale of poisonous antiseptics, and of patent medicines containing poisons, are placed under greater restriction, it is well to remember that there are germicides which fulfil their purpose equally as well as those preparations which are poisonous in their action.

SALINE ENEMATA IN HÆMORRHAGE.

It is a well-established fact that the use of saline solutions are of great usefulness in cases of hæmorrhage. The customary method of employing these is by injection into a vein, but this has obviously many difficulties and some disadvantages. The solution has to be carefully sterilized, and the

special apparatus required is frequently unobtainable, and invaluable time is thus lost. In a German medical contemporary, attention has recently been drawn to a case in which there was hæmorrhage to an alarming extent after abortion, and the practitioner in attendance adopted the plan of giving an enema of about a pint and a half of water, to which a teaspoonful of ordinary salt had been added. The fluid was only allowed to enter the rectum very slowly, and within a few minutes the patient had a slight shivering, the pulse, which before could not be felt at all, became distinctly perceptible at the wrist, and the patient finally made a good recovery. Encouraged by this result, the author tried the treatment in 26 other cases, and with invariable success. He believes that the fluid is entirely absorbed in less than five minutes. The amount of solution usually employed was between 35 and 70 ounces, and all the cases treated were subsequent to parturition. The powers of absorption of the rectum are well known, and, to quote an analogous fact, it is customary now amongst abdominal surgeons, when there has been any excessive hæmorrhage during an operation, not only to wash out the abdominal cavity with warm water containing a saline, but to leave some of the fluid for the peritoneum to absorb, with the well-recognised result that the patient's pulse will improve, and the effects of the hæmorrhage will be minimised. It is evident, therefore, that in the injection of saline fluids into the rectum, we have a remedy which, theoretically, may be expected to yield good results in all cases of excessive hæmorrhage, except, in those in which the bleeding comes from the intestinal tract, and in which cases, of course, the result of the flushing of the intestines might be to wash away the coagulum over ulcerated surfaces or open vessels and so increase the tendency to a recurrence of the bleeding.

THE WEIGHT OF CHILDREN.

It is a practical and interesting fact which is founded upon a large number of statistics that a healthy infant if properly nursed, should double its weight in the first six months of life, and treble it in a year. From which it is argued, that if a child does not increase in weight at the rate of 1 lb. a month during the first year of life, and at the rate of 12 ozs. a month during the second year, its nutrition cannot be satisfactory. It is also argued that there must be something at fault in its nourishment if it does not grow nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch every month during the first year of life, and $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch a month during the second year of life.

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