

Medical Matters.

CHOLERA.



The International Hygienic Congress at Budapest has accomplished some excellent work in the discussion of cholera and diphtheria. Regarding the former subject, no fewer than 26 papers were contributed, several of which were earnestly discussed. It was agreed that Asiatic Cholera is characterized by the presence of vibrio-like bacilli, and that these are the cause of the disease. The practical results of bacteriological investigation so far as cholera is concerned have hitherto been neither great nor decisive because it has not proved possible to distinguish cholera bacilli from others with absolute certainty. It was shown that the cholera microbes could remain dormant in water for months after an epidemic had ceased, and could then produce a fresh outbreak of the disease; that the action of other microbes upon those of cholera had been investigated very carefully, and that some assisted the propagation of the latter, while others were hostile, and prevented their growth. Consequently the assumption is that the susceptibility of mankind to cholera depends to a very great extent upon the nature of the other microbes which might be present at the time in the digestive organs of the person into whose alimentary canal the cholera microbe had found its way. It was thought on this ground that Professor Koch's vibrio was a specific antidote to the cholera germ. Interesting statements were made concerning the recent epidemic in Belgium; many cases occurring in the same locality and the same tenements which had been affected in previous epidemics. The fondness of cholera for enfeebled persons and for drunkards was shown by very noteworthy statistics. The disease was stamped out in Belgium in 1892 solely by the hygienic methods which were adopted, Government action having swept away many of the insalubrious dwellings and rookeries in which previous epidemics of cholera had found a comfortable home. The epidemic of 1892, therefore, only involved the deaths of between 1,400 and 1,500 persons, whereas those in 1849, 1853, 1854, and 1866 carried off more than 86,000 victims. The most practical papers on the subject came from London, and dealt with methods of treatment as

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well as of mere histology. With reference to the incidence of cholera in India it was shown conclusively that there was a decrease in the cholera mortality to the west of Calcutta according to the diminution in the rainfall. Finally, the old belief that cholera was chiefly disseminated by means of water was once more amply supported by irrefutable proofs.

DIABETES.

In a recent number of a Berlin contemporary attention is drawn to some premonitory symptoms in diabetes, amongst which frequent cramps in the calves of the legs seem to be somewhat common, and appearing long before the typical thirst and loss of flesh. It is well known of course that in many cases nerve and dyspeptic disturbances are frequently found to a marked extent in the commencement of the disease, and in our own experience extreme weariness, weakness, and irritability are also very frequent as marked premonitory symptoms.

THYROID EXTRACT.

An interesting and important case was published in an Austrian contemporary last month. A man, aged 40, had a large goitre, which chiefly affected the right side of the thyroid, removed, and shortly afterwards developed considerable mental disturbance, bordering on melancholia. He lay in bed as if stupified, taking no interest in anything; his memory became defective and he could not make the most simple calculation. The thyroid gland on the left side was quite atrophied. He was fed on raw thyroids and rapidly improved. When the thyroid was given too rapidly, or in too great an amount, he suffered from headache, but both his mental state and his general health rapidly improved, and continued to do so, even after the treatment had been discontinued.

SPINAL SURGERY.

It is well recognised that certain nerve troubles, and especially some forms of paralysis, are due to pressure upon the nerve tissue by fluid in the surrounding sheath. This is especially the case in some forms of paraplegia due to compression of the spinal cord, and a number of cases have recently been recorded in which good results were obtained by a novel operation. The spinal column was cut down upon at the back, the processes of the vertebræ chiselled through, and the dura mater punctured or freely opened, giving exit to the compressing fluid. The wound was kept open by a drainage tube of iodoform gauze, and each case healed well and without suppuration; and apparently the patient recovered to a considerable extent, if not entirely, the use of his paralysed limbs.

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