

## Medical Matters.

### PILLS.



It would not be inappropriate, so far as medical treatment is concerned, to term the present—a Pill Age. At any rate, Pills have become a universal means of medication, and the greatest improvements have been effected, within recent years, both in the manufacture of these useful articles and in the greater variety of drugs which are thus employed. Thanks to such enterprising and scientific pharmacists as Messrs. Allen & Hanburys and Messrs. Burroughs, Wellcome & Co., medicines of the most nauseous description, and which, therefore, formerly, could not be prescribed with advantage, because few, if any, patients could tolerate them, are now usefully and easily administered either in the shape of tabloids of the pure compressed powder; or in that of elegantly coated pills. The days of bread pills, and of the hard, somewhat irregular, sticky, nauseous compounds, which used to be dispensed under the name of pills, have passed away, and, it is to be hoped, for ever. Scientific pharmacy has, for some time, been engaged in providing new forms of coating for pills. Varnish and silver paper have both disadvantages which render them inapplicable in certain cases; and, in the making of a pill, the question has now to be considered as to whether the drug, which is employed, is desired to act upon the stomach or upon the mucous membrane of the intestines. In the former case, it is necessary that the pills should have a coating which will easily and speedily dissolve. In the latter, it is necessary that the material employed should be able to resist the warmth and acid secretions of the stomach, and, therefore, maintain the enclosed drug intact until the globule has entered the intestines. This naturally implies a considerable knowledge of the physiological processes of digestion on the part of the pharmacist, and it is an additional proof of the great advances which are being made in this department. Recent experiments have shown that in order to pass a pill through the stomach undigested, a coating composed of a mixture of shellac and salol dissolved in alcohol gives excellent results. For example, methylene blue given in this manner, coated with this material, was found to give the characteristic

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colouring to the intestinal excretions. But by washing out the stomach no trace of the presence of the colouring matter was found, proving that it had passed through that organ undigested, and had dissolved in the intestines. An interesting point was also discovered in this connection, that intestinal cathartics acted more promptly when administered with this coating than when permitted to dissolve in the stomach. And there can be no doubt that in certain cases of poisoning, by ptomaines formed in the intestines, treatment would be much more effectual if applied in the form of antiseptics which would not be dissolved until they reached the affected area.

### IS CANCER CONTAGIOUS?

At the French Congress of Surgery, held this month at Lyons, an important paper was presented, in which the author attempted to prove that cancer is a contagious disease, and he furnished forty cases which he had collected, and in which malignant disease appeared to have been communicated from person to person. It is interesting to observe that he also held the opinion to which attention of the profession in England was directed some time since by Mr. D'Arcy Power, that there are real cancer houses, the dwellers in which, although entirely unrelated in blood, are successively, or even simultaneously, affected by malignant disease. He certainly showed that it is by no means infrequent for cases of cancer to occur, in which two people living together are apparently affected one from the other. Of a hundred such cases, in 85 the persons attacked were man and wife, and in 8 they were medical men who had been specially engaged for some length of time in attendance upon cases of malignant disease.

### THE LATEST MIRACLE.

It is reported on good authority that a patient suffering from ulceration of the stomach was persuaded to pay a visit to the Holy Well of St. Winifred, in order to obtain a more rapid cure than medical treatment was effecting. On her return she informed her friends that she felt well, and that she could eat anything, and it is supposed that she felt sufficient faith in her cure to eat a good meal. The result, however, was that while eating she was seized with the most agonizing pains. Perforation of the stomach was diagnosed; the ulcer probably having been irritated by the dietary she had prescribed for herself, and she died in about twenty-four hours. The case is a good illustration of the harm which may be, and indeed is, done by expecting the ordinary course of pathological changes to be altered by a miracle.

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