

Medical Matters.

THE ENTRIES AT THE MEDICAL SCHOOLS.



The complete list of the numbers of medical students who have, in October, commenced their studies in London has now been published, and it discloses the fact that the complete number is only 552, or almost exactly an average of fifty new students at each of the Medical Schools. This is considerably lower than the entries have been for many years. In 1885 there were nearly one hundred more; and until 1892 there were considerably more than six hundred entries each year. This diminution in the numbers is probably, to some extent, due to the fact that the standard of training has been recently raised from four to five years, and that the examinations are becoming more difficult. The public, however, need be under no alarm in respect to a possible dearth of doctors because, at the present day, there is an undoubted excess in the number of medical men necessary to meet the wants of the sick. The prolonged curriculum, if it have a still greater influence in future on the numbers of medical men in this country, will probably have a beneficial result to everyone concerned, in the greater knowledge and experience which those will possess who finally become qualified to treat the sick.

THE CIRCULATION.

Gradually increasing knowledge in medicine and its cognate sciences has upset a good many ideas and theories which were formerly held. Until very lately, for example, it was believed that under ordinary circumstances, that is to say unless the healthy condition of a part was interfered with by some inflammatory condition, the amount of blood which was to be found in any given portion of the body at any given moment remained a constant quantity, that the blood flowed on and on, and that, therefore, the vessels being always full, the quantity of blood was always the same. It has now been proved that great differences exist in this matter, and that by means of the vaso-motor nerves, the vessels of any part of the body dilate or contract from minute to minute. The amount of blood, therefore, which is contained in them is a constantly variable quantity. A curious experiment to prove this has been performed. A man was placed upon an accurately and very finely balanced scale, with his head on one side of the pivot and his feet on the other. The man was then directed to think deeply, and forthwith his head began to move downwards, and his feet to go up, in consequence of the flow of blood to the brain being increased, at the ex-

pense of the amount of blood which was circulating in the lower limbs. The physiological fact is of great interest in understanding various symptoms which occur in the progress of disease.

MIDWIFERY IN NEW ZEALAND.

A very interesting paper recently appeared in a New Zealand contemporary concerning the methods adopted in that country in midwifery practice. It appears that it is customary to administer chloroform even to complete narcosis, and at an early stage of labour. It is well known that when this practice is adopted, not only is sensibility lost, but uterine contraction is also largely interfered with, and may completely cease. The dangers, therefore, of this treatment are, first, the necessity for the use of forceps or other instrumental means; and, secondly, the difficulty with which contraction is obtained after the expulsion of the placenta, and, therefore, the frequency with which alarming post-partum hæmorrhage occurs. In the cases reported in our contemporary, there were no maternal deaths at all, and the forceps were used in more than 39 per cent. of the cases, so that the results were exceptionally good. In this country, it is customary to administer only very small quantities of the anæsthetic, and so sparingly as to render unconsciousness only transitory and partial. By this means uterine action is preserved, and contraction subsequently is not interfered with.

CHECKING THE SECRETION OF MILK.

All obstetric Nurses are aware of the painful, and occasionally dangerous, condition into which the breasts of the mother sometimes pass if the infant dies shortly after birth. In many of these cases the use of the breast pump entirely fails to relieve, while, from a physiological standpoint, it represents an unscientific plan of treatment, because its action tends to maintain the constant secretion of milk, and therefore to perpetuate the difficulty. In many cases the belladonna extract or plaister which is applied in order to check the secretion also fails in its purpose. The breasts become enormously distended and exceedingly painful, and this condition, unless relieved, will pass on to the formation of abscess. It is therefore useful for obstetric Nurses to notice that cocaine has been recently tried in Italy as a means of checking the secretion of milk, in these cases, and with excellent results, even in instances in which belladonna and other ordinary remedies have completely failed. A five per cent solution of hydrochlorate of cocaine in glycerine was painted twice or thrice a day over both breasts, and, as a rule, within a few hours, the secretion diminished, and in two or three days had entirely ceased.

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