

Medical Matters.

AURAL REFLEXES.



A VALUABLE series of articles upon this subject which are now appearing in the columns of our esteemed contemporary the *Medical Times*, throw light upon various obscure complaints which are caused by diseases of the ear. For example, the author shows that troublesome coughs are often due to the fixation of plugs of wax in the outer ear, these becoming dry and hardened, and setting up so much reflex nerve irritation as to cause violent spasms of coughing; and he shows that such cases, after being treated for some long time, without success, by ordinary medicines, have been entirely cured by the simple expedient of syringing the ear and thus removing the wax which was the cause of the complaint. Cases are also cited in which extreme hiccough has been found to be due to the same cause and reflex irritation of the nerve supplying the diaphragm. Then again, there are cases in which syringing the ear is followed by faintness or even symptoms of collapse; and these are so important that they should be always remembered. The author quotes instances in which patients have become quite unconscious and have even passed into a comatose condition after this simple measure has been carried out, and then it was found that the membrane of the tympanum had been either broken through by the force of the injected water, or had been previously destroyed by disease. In either case, the passage of fluid into the inner ear had caused severe symptoms of compression of the brain. The practical lesson to be learned from these last cases is that syringing of the ear, which is looked upon, usually, as a very simple and harmless procedure, should only be carried out under medical direction, and after the tympanum had been carefully examined for signs of disease.

COFFEE FOR OBSTRUCTION

A French contemporary has recently drawn attention to the beneficial results which appear to be attained in certain cases of obstruction of the bowels, from the use of coffee. An infusion of 250 grammes—about nine

ounces—of coffee is made in twelve cups of boiling water, and one cupful is administered every fifteen minutes until eight have been taken, the remaining four being given at intervals of half an hour. Our contemporary gives illustrations proving that this treatment brought about the reduction of a number of severe cases of strangulated hernia, which resisted ordinary measures for their relief, on the average in four hours each; and produced equally good results in the same short period in cases of extreme obstruction from other causes. In some cases in which it was impossible to get the patient to take the coffee by the mouth, hypodermic injections of caffeine were given with equally good results. The remedy can do no harm, even if it does not always yield the excellent effects claimed for it by our contemporary, and it will therefore probably, be deemed by many medical men to be well worthy of a trial in the very dangerous cases alluded to.

TOBACCO AND THE EYESIGHT.

DURING the last fifty years it has become recognised that immoderate smoking causes a definite disease of the eye; and many cases in which a complete loss of sight has occurred, and which formerly were regarded as hopeless, are now known to be curable by making the patient abstain from tobacco. These patients almost invariably at first have "colour blindness"—that is to say, they take red to be brown or black, and green they believe to be light blue or orange. In nearly every case, the pupils are much contracted, in some cases to such an extreme extent that the patient is not able to move about without assistance. One such man admitted that he had usually smoked from twenty to thirty cigars a day. He consented to give up smoking altogether, and his sight was fully restored in three and a-half months. It has been found that chewing is much worse than smoking in its effect upon the eyesight, probably for the simple reason that more of the poison is thereby absorbed. The condition found in the eye in the early stages is that of extreme congestion only; but this, unless remedied at once, leads to gradually increasing disease of the optic nerve, and then, of course, blindness is absolute and beyond remedy. It is therefore evident that, to be of any value, the treatment of disease of the eye due to excessive smoking must be immediate, or it will probably be useless.

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