

Medical Matters.

CONSUMPTION.



FRENCH physicians are at present devoting a very considerable amount of attention to the question of the average duration of life in patients suffering from chronic Consumption, and incidentally their researches have elicited some interesting and important facts. While they show that it is impossible to predict, with any certainty, the duration of life in these cases, they at any rate have proved that certain conditions exert a very detrimental, or very beneficial, effect on the progress of the disease. For example, in those who are compelled to live in impure air or darkened rooms, and who have unsuitable food, or are subject to mental anxiety and depression there is invariably a tendency to a more rapid termination of the disease than in those patients who live under healthier and happier conditions. It will be interesting to readers of this journal to know that hospital Nurses, in France at any rate, seem to be especially liable to attacks of Phthisis, and to its rapid course. This is probably due to the unhealthy surroundings in which so many French Nurses live; because the experience is not confirmed by medical authorities in this country. Even in Chest Hospitals, where the possibility of infection is greatest, it is a well-known fact that Nurses rarely suffer from the complaint. It is proved that the use of impure cod liver oil, or of any other drug which may derange the digestive system, will lead to a marked aggravation of consumption. Then, whilst age naturally exerts a great influence upon the course of the disease—the young being more liable to its ravages than the old, and when attacked, more subject to acute changes than are those who are long past middle life—it is proved beyond dispute that sex exerts no influence at all upon the progress of consumption. These results, generally speaking, are in entire accordance with those at which the profession in this country have independently arrived, and there can be no doubt that the great reduction in the mortality of Phthisis which has taken place during recent years, and

the greater frequency with which consumptive patients recover than was formerly the case, are due to the more scientific appreciation of the fact that the progress of Phthisis depends upon the general health, and that the first principle of treatment in these cases is attention to the general condition of the patient rather than to the local disease.

GOUTY HEART.

MANY years ago, it was a very common description of the end of gouty patients to say that they had died from "gout attacking the heart;" and even, at the present day, a considerable section of the public, even amongst the well-educated classes who chiefly suffer from the complaint, confess their dread that the disease may attack this particular organ. It is, as a matter of fact, comparatively rare for gouty patients to die really from a heart affection. In ordinary diseases of the organ which are met with amongst gouty persons, the chances of life are very favourable, and if over-exertion on the one hand, and too free living on the other, be prevented, such patients usually live to a respectable old age. The particular trouble from which gouty patients suffer, is a chronic thickening of the bloodvessels, which, by disturbing the circulation renders the work of the heart more difficult, and therefore throws unusual strain upon its muscular power, a fact which explains the necessity for such patients to avoid over-exertion; while, at the same time, it illustrates, from the theoretical point of view, the great practical advantages which are derived from systematic gymnastic exercises, strengthening the heart's tissue and enabling it the better to overcome the resistance in the circulation caused by the thickened arteries.

ALUMINIUM INSTRUMENTS.

A MEDICAL man has uttered a word of warning against spatulas and other nursing instruments made of celluloid, on the ground of their inflammability; now one of the staff at Charing Cross Hospital condemns the use of aluminium for similar purposes on the discovery that the metal forms with mercury an unstable amalgam, and that therefore aluminium spatulas, knives, dose-spoons, beakers, medicine-flasks, drug-boxes, and the like may lead to trouble, if not possible danger, when used without discrimination for preparations in the ordinary working pharmacopœia of the family doctor.

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