

**Medical Matters.****GERM CARRIERS.**

It has often been assumed, especially in Eastern countries, that flies are most dangerous germ carriers. In India, for example, it has been proved, again and again, that, in times of cholera epidemics, flies will pass from infected bodies or materials on to milk, meat, fruits, and other edibles exposed for sale in the streets, and that those who take such tainted food will be attacked by the disease. From this well-known fact, the evil influence of flies has been inferred. But some German physicians have recently tested the truth of this theory in the most complete manner. They have examined flies who have been shut up in a room with a consumptive patient, and which have settled upon the sputum. Both in the bodies and upon the feet of these flies the bacilli of tubercle have been invariably found, and the possibility, therefore, of the infection of consumption being thus conveyed from the sick to the healthy is thus established beyond all dispute. Nowadays, when science is straining every nerve to prevent disease, it is well that such a very serious source of infection should be remembered and be provided against. The need for excluding flies from infected rooms on the one hand, and for absolute carefulness and cleanliness in respect to all foods on the other, is too obvious for further comment.

**RED LIGHT IN SMALL-POX.**

It is well known that red light possesses some peculiar property which alters the chemical effect produced by other rays composing the solar spectrum. A red light is used in photographic dark rooms because its rays do not affect the sensitive plate in the process of developing. A century ago, it was suggested that the pits which appear on the face after a severe attack of small-pox might be due to the action of the sunlight. With a view of testing this theory, the windows of the rooms in which such patients were confined have been shaded by curtains of various colours. The results of the first experiments were not satisfactory. The idea was again and again revived, however, and lately some tests have been made with red material, which has a greater power than orange to exclude the other rays. This light was tried on several unvaccinated children suffering from small-pox in a German Hospital, and the disease immediately took a favourable turn. Although the pits appeared, they did not

break, and finally disappeared, leaving the skin perfectly smooth. There was no secondary fever. According to Dr. Feilberg, who conducted this test, the essential point for the success of this treatment is that it should be begun during the early stages of the disease, shortly after the pits, or vesicles, have appeared. If the seventh day has been reached, it is hardly possible to prevent the pits from breaking, and hence becoming permanent. Another important point is that the exclusion of the chemical rays of daylight must be complete and continued until the vesicles have quite dried up.

**THE CARE OF THE INSANE.**

IN no department of Nursing work are improvements more urgently required than in Asylums. Until very recently indeed, nothing has been done to improve the conditions of the work, which have remained in many Institutions exactly as they were a hundred years ago. Nowadays, it is well understood by laymen, as well as medical men, that Insanity is as much a disease as Pneumonia or Meningitis, and not merely, as it was formerly described, "a visitation of God." It is, furthermore, well-known that insane patients are subject to other diseases in which Nursing is of recognised value. Yet in many Institutions, even at the present day, the attendants are not specially trained for their work, and almost invariably are chosen rather for their physical strength than on account of their special experience and knowledge. On the other hand, comparatively few trained Nurses apply for posts at Asylums, partly because of a certain amount of prejudice which still exists against such Institutions, but chiefly, perhaps, because in the majority of Asylums no effort has yet been made to improve the conditions under which Nurses are engaged. For the last five or six years, however, earnest efforts have been made by many Asylum Superintendents to bring about improvements in this direction, to elevate the general tone of the employées, to introduce better systems of Nursing, and, above all, to attach to the Asylums the services of well-trained Nurses. These efforts have met, already, with much success, and it is probable that, hereafter, Nurses who have passed through a regular course of training in a General Hospital, will devote themselves entirely to this branch of work. The Medico-Psychological Association has rendered invaluable public service in promoting this reform, and its examinations for certificates in Nursing the insane—an advertisement of which appears in our Supplement this week—are stimulating the present attendants all over the country to improve their knowledge and efficiency.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)