

Medical Matters.

HOT AIR BATHS.



THE advantages of the treatment of cases of kidney disease by hot air baths are well known; and, by many physicians, the latter are much preferred both to vapour, or to hot water, baths; for the same effect is produced with distinctly less exertion and consequent exhaustion on the part of the patient. The administration is more simple, and the results are more satisfactory. The abundant perspiration induced by the hot air affords relief, not only to the kidney in its work, but also to the whole circulation of the blood. The amount of urine diminishes, the day after the bath, but on the following day it has been frequently noticed that there is a temporary excess of urine; the kidneys evidently acting better for the short rest. The proportion of albumen after a bath is usually much less than it was before; and as this result is almost invariably attained after a certain number of baths, the albumen may even disappear altogether. The method of administration is very simple; all that is required being an ordinary bed with a cradle to raise the bed clothes, and beneath the bed a spirit stove, with a long pipe, so as to direct the hot air under the clothes. The patient's head is, of course, kept outside the clothes, but the rest of his body lying on a blanket is kept exposed to the hot air for about twenty minutes; and the bath is repeated, as a rule, every three or four days. The one ill effect which is occasionally produced is marked excitation of the heart's action; palpitation and occasional faintness may be complained of. This fact must always be remembered by Nurses, because, in many cases of advanced kidney disease, the heart is affected, and if there be any heart weakness this may certainly be accentuated by the action of the bath. It is a good practical rule, therefore, in this, as in all other procedures in which the patient's strength may be suddenly exhausted, that the Nurse should have brandy, or some other stimulant, ready at hand.

CANCER INFECTION.

SOME important experiments have recently been reported by a French physician, in relation to the often questioned possibility

of conveying cancer by direct infection from person to person. This observer had inoculated fragments of cancerous material removed from patients into the cellular tissues of animals. At the inoculated spot, tumours were produced, the largest of which weighed about 1lb. 5ozs. Serum from the inoculated animal was then injected into patients suffering from cancer. The first case was one of cancer of the breast, and in this "an almost complete cure was effected after forty-five days' treatment"; the tumour, it was stated, becoming atrophied, and being transformed into a small fibrous nodule. The second case was one of epithelioma of the forehead; this shrank and almost disappeared in thirty-five days. In both these cases, the amount of the serum injected around the growth itself varied from 2 to 5 c.cm. every three days. The third case was one of recurrent epithelioma of the upper lip, ulcerated and fungated. After twenty-three days of the serum treatment the progress of this tumour appeared to be arrested, but there was no tendency to cure. The cases cannot be regarded as conclusive because there are elements of error which could hardly be eliminated in so few cases. But the progress of knowledge is increased, by each discovery, and those who are most acquainted with the ravages of malignant disease are those who are most hopeful that some day we shall be able to counteract and cure its effects. Cases such as those described, although by no means conclusive, will undoubtedly stimulate observers, both in this country and elsewhere, to fresh efforts in the search after a cure for cancer.

DISINFECTING BOOKS.

ONE of the greatest difficulties after scarlet fever, and similar infectious diseases, is to disinfect the books and prints which have been exposed to the infectious germs. Very often there are sentimental reasons against destroying such articles, or their value may be too great; for it is impossible to expose them to a degree of heat sufficient to destroy the germs without at the same time destroying the articles themselves. It will, therefore, be good news to many to know that by exposing such books to the vapour of *Formalin* for fifteen minutes the most virulent germs can be destroyed. The vapour causes no injury to the book, and only excites a temporary irritation of the nose and eyes of the manipulator, somewhat similar to that which is produced by the vapour of ammonia.

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