

Medical Matters.



THE X RAYS.

WE have recently alluded, in this column, to the changes which are reported to be caused in the skin of persons exposed for long periods of time to the Röntgen rays. Evidence is accumulating that the influence of this light is very great. The case is now reported of an operator who, after some months' work with the apparatus, lost most of his finger nails and the skin of one hand, three times. At the same time, he suffered from a severe eruption upon the hand, including a painful swelling and discharge from the tips of his fingers. The only remedy from which he found any benefit was to keep his hands constantly covered with lanoline, when at work, so as to protect them from the direct influence of the rays. A German contemporary also reports the case of another operator whose hands have peeled, and who is showing signs of premature baldness. These facts corroborate other cases, to which we have already called attention, as to the physiological effect of these rays in destroying the skin, hair, and nails. If they have such power as this to injure healthy tissues, it is possible that, before long, it may be discovered that they possess valuable curative properties in cases of disease.

STEAM FOR ECZEMA.

THE use of warm baths in severe cases of eczema is well-known, and indeed they are almost invaluable in the treatment of some patients suffering from a chronic form of disease. An American physician has recently employed, and recorded, his observations in the treatment of this affection by means of a current of steam between 104° and 122° in temperature. The tube from the kettle is kept from three to five inches away from the skin, and is directed upon it for from fifteen to thirty minutes at a time. He claims that by this means crusts and scales are rapidly and completely removed; that the formation of pus on the raw surface is diminished, or altogether prevented; and that not only are the tissues around and underneath the affected area softened by the application, but also that

the thickening produced by the disease is absorbed, and the new skin forms more rapidly over the raw surface than is the case when ordinary treatment is employed. The physician in question frequently adds medicinal vapours to the steam instead of employing water alone. There can be no doubt that the treatment, not only from its simplicity, but from its safety, deserves to be carefully tried in this country, and if its utility is proved, the method of its administration might be easily simplified, and improved.

STONES IN THE OESOPHAGUS.

TWO very interesting cases have recently occurred in the Philadelphia Hospital. Within a few weeks, two children were admitted into that Institution suffering from precisely the same unusual accident—a curious coincidence, counterparts of which, by the way, are traditional in all large Hospitals. The story of the second case, which is reported at length in an American contemporary, will describe both. The child, aged three years, was playing with jack-stones, put one in her mouth, and was suddenly observed to be choking. The mother found the stone had slipped back into the pharynx, and, while attempting to extract it with her finger, pushed it down into the oesophagus. The breathing was relieved, but the child became unable to swallow first solid food and then even liquids. Four days after the accident, she was admitted into the Hospital, and by means of the fluorescent screen, the stone impacted at the middle of the oesophagus could be distinctly seen. Efforts by means of forceps, bougies, and an ingenious arrangement of silk and a pledget of gauze having failed to catch the stone and withdraw it, and the child's condition growing worse, the only other alternative operation was performed. The stomach was opened, a silk thread was passed up the oesophagus through the mouth by means of a bougie, a thick pledget of gauze was tied to the end of the silk, and this being pulled up the oesophagus, and out through the mouth, brought away the stone with it. The openings in the stomach and in the abdominal walls were then closed in the usual manner, and the child recovered without a bad symptom. The case proves once more both the practical value of the new Photography, and the wonderful vitality of a healthy infant.

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