

Medical Matters.

THE RÖNTGEN RAYS.



A VERY remarkable case has recently been published in a French contemporary, which, so far as we are aware, is the first recorded example of the employment of the X Rays in the treatment of acute disease. The patient was a man, aged twenty, who, after an apparent attack of typhoid fever, developed pneumonia. After a time, the temperature fell, and shortly afterwards rose again, and, finally, symptoms of suppuration of the lung became evident. At the end of six weeks' illness, the patient appeared to be dying, with all the symptoms of hectic fever. He was then exposed to the Röntgen Rays for fifty-five minutes every day. After the fourth exposure, the temperature fell suddenly, and did not rise again. There was profuse sweating, and the patient soon completely recovered. After ten applications, patches of ulceration occurred upon the skin; and it is argued that the rays probably caused equally marked changes in the deeper tissues. French physicians express the belief that the effect of the rays must in this case have been destructive to the bacilli, which caused the lung disease. But, whether this be so or not, the case is a remarkable one, for it is almost impossible to believe that the recovery of the patient, under such circumstances as those described, could possibly have been a mere coincidence. The effects produced by the X Rays on diseased tissues are now being very carefully investigated, and it is possible that medical science may be on the verge of most important discoveries.

RECTAL INJECTIONS.

A METHOD of supplying the blood with the necessary amount of fluid after excessive hæmorrhages, which has not received the attention it deserves, is that of injecting large quantities of warm water, containing common salt, into the rectum and large intestine. It is a fact well known to all experienced abdominal operators that the greatest benefit can be given to the patient, when an abdominal operation has been accompanied by profuse hæmorrhage, by washing out the

abdominal cavity with a warm saline fluid, and by allowing a quantity of it to remain in the cavity when the wound is closed. The peritoneum has a remarkable power of absorption of fluid, and eagerly absorbs such a saline solution when the blood vessels are depleted by hæmorrhage. And, in a minor degree, the walls of the large intestine which are known, from a physiological point of view, to possess immense powers of absorbing fluids, can in such cases quickly take up large injections of salt and water. Cases are known in which the patient appeared to be reduced to the last extremity by loss of blood, and in which death was almost certainly averted by this simple measure; three or four pints of hot water, containing a tablespoonful of salt to the pint, being injected into the rectum, and evidently being rapidly absorbed by the surface of the large intestines.

THIRST.

ONE of the most distressing complaints from which patients suffer, especially after loss of blood, is the feeling of extreme thirst. For example, it is well known that after gunshot wounds or sabre cuts on the field of battle, soldiers complain of this terrible thirst far more than of any particular pain directly caused by their injuries. It often tries the patience, ingenuity, and experience of the nurse to the utmost to endeavour to alleviate or remove this symptom. For example, after an abdominal operation, this is probably the patient's chief complaint, and yet experience proves that it is essential to allow nothing to be taken by the mouth, for at least twenty-four hours after the operation. There is a mistaken idea that ice is one of the best methods of relieving thirst, and it is a fallacy which is most difficult to dispel. As a matter of fact, sucking ice increases the sensation of thirst; and the more ice which is given the more does the patient usually want. The physiological explanation is very simple, seeing that the cold contracts the blood vessels of the mouth, and so diminishes the activity of the salivary glands, and thus prevents the natural amount of saliva being excreted. The best method of relieving thirst in such cases, therefore, from a practical, as well as a theoretical, point of view, is to allow the patient to wash out the mouth frequently with warm water, whereby the flow of saliva is stimulated, and so the sensation of thirst is most rapidly removed.

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