

Medical Matters.

INFANTILE DIARRHŒA.



ONE of the most fatal complaints with which medical men have to deal is that form of diarrhœa which occurs in infants or young children. Its onset is sometimes so very sudden, its severity so great, and the exhaustion which it produces so profound, that the infant seems to collapse all at once, and before any medical treatment can be employed; sometimes even before it can be obtained the baby has passed beyond all human aid. To this rapidly fatal form, the name of infant's cholera has been aptly given. But, after all, this is not as common, and therefore does not claim so many victims in this country as the more mild and more chronic form to which the somewhat contemptuous description of "diarrhœa" is given. In the latter, the onset is generally more gradual, the action of the bowels is less frequent, the exhaustion is more gradual; but the loss of flesh increases until in a few days the infant seems wasted to a skeleton and then death ensues, unless treatment proves effectual. Formerly, many of these cases were popularly diagnosed as "consumption of the bowels." Now, it is well understood by medical men that in the great majority of cases, the one and only cause is irritation of the intestines usually from undigested or indigestible food. And it is therefore a fairly safe rule, to which most practitioners adhere, that the two golden rules of treatment of such cases are, first, to clear the intestines of any irritating material which may have induced the mischief, and secondly, to prevent further irritation by scrupulous attention to the diet. The common sense of these principles is evident when they are thus expressed; but it is an extraordinary fact that hundreds of lives are sacrificed each year by ignorant persons, chemists, and quacks treating such cases by mere rule of thumb methods—for example, giving chalk to check the diarrhœa instead of a small dose of castor oil to clear the intestines. Or if by good fortune the irritation ceased, then it is painfully common to find that no dietary precautions of any kind are taken to prevent any recurrence of the trouble. In nine cases out of ten, if the

irritation is removed, and the child is fed on milk which has been boiled and so sterilised, and no other food is permitted to be given, it will completely recover. In fact, the success of common sense treatment in these cases is as great as the danger of the complaint if it be neglected.

LEAD POISONING.

A CASE recorded this week in the daily papers, proves that the liability to poisoning of workers in any kind of lead is very great. The boy in question was engaged in electrical work, and only incidentally had to come in contact with the poisonous material. But he died during a fit evidently caused by lead poisoning, and apparently was the only worker in the factory who was so affected. A somewhat similar case is reported from Paris, of a woman engaged in making artificial flowers, and who in her work used a large amount of some special green paper. In order to handle this more easily she was in the habit of constantly moistening her fingers with her tongue. It was found by analysis that there was a large amount of lead in this paper, but the curious feature of the case was that, out of a large number of workers, she was the only one affected, the other women, although exposed to equal danger, escaping all bad results. The chief characteristics of poisoning by this metal are, first, the marked blue line along the gums; the severe abdominal pain to which the name of "lead colic" is given, and which is evidently due to the constipating effect of the metal; and thirdly, various nerve affections, either in the form of paralyses, especially of the muscles of the forearm in the shape of the well-known "wrist drop," or the epileptic attacks that proved fatal in the case to which reference has just been made.

Diseases of the Kidneys.*

By N. V. GOODSPEED, M.D.

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AFTER the sweating process abates, in from two to three hours, the nurse should wipe the patient dry and change the damp sheets to warm dry ones. Hot-air and steam baths are often serviceable, and the skilful nurse will ring the changes on these.

* We reprint this interesting article from the *Nursing World*.

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