

Medical Matters.

THE THYROID GLAND.



THE remarkable results which have been obtained, in the treatment of various diseases, by preparations of the thyroid gland have attracted the attention of the medical profession in every country to the action which the organ must play in health as well as in disease.

Consequently, the investigations which have been carried out in this direction have elicited a number of important facts which were previously unknown. It has been definitely proved, especially by experiments in Germany, that when the gland is removed in adult animals no serious symptoms follow unless the organs known as the "parathyroid glands" are also taken away. But recent experiments in France have shown that in young animals the removal of the thyroid brings about marked changes. In growing dogs and cats, a marked interference with development was at once noted, and the animal invariably became unusually developed in breadth, while its increase in height seemed to be greatly checked. Then the extremities of the limbs in every case became unusually enlarged. The face became wrinkled, and the skin of the entire body gradually took on that special waxy change, with the swollen puffy appearance to which the name of myxœdematous degeneration has been given. This result is both curious and interesting, because it is in these cases that the best results of the thyroid gland treatment have been obtained, and it of course goes to prove that the part taken in the development of the body by the thyroid glands, and which has hitherto not been at all suspected, is very great. In some animals, the changes, described, progressed until they presented the appearance typical of *cretinism*, a fact which is again interesting, and which would lead perhaps to the gland being used in the treatment of those cases.

BEE POISON.

GERMAN scientists are above all things painstaking; but probably no investigation conducted by German physiologists has ever been so exhaustive as that recently carried out by Dr. Langer. He has recently reported that by sacrificing altogether about 25,000 bees

he has obtained conclusive evidence regarding the nature of their poison. He appears to have obtained this by holding the bee between two fingers and slightly irritating it. It then protrudes its sting, on the end of which one drop of poison appears. He either collected this in a few drops of distilled water, in which the poison is readily and completely soluble, or he permitted the bee to sting some blotting-paper, which collected the poison, or he removed the entire poisonous apparatus, and by means of alcohol extracted the poison. It was found the material is clear, acid, very bitter to the taste, and exhales an aromatic odour. When exposed to the air, it remains poisonous for about four weeks. Used by injection, the poison produced local inflammations, and when injected into a dog in considerable quantities, it caused speedy death with the ordinary symptoms of tetanus, and conditions in the internal organs which have hitherto been regarded as distinctive of poisoning by the rattle-snake and the viper.

INFECTION.

ATTENTION has recently been drawn in a French contemporary to the possibility of scarlet fever being transmitted by means of letters. The case occurred in a boy two and a half years old, living at home, and in a district which had been free from scarlet fever for some years. Six days before the boy was taken ill, a letter was received from his grandparents living at some distance, announcing that a child who was staying with them was "shedding her skin like a snake." A few pieces of skin were enclosed in evidence of the fact. The letter and its contents were used as a plaything by the boy until the day he sickened, and there can be little doubt that the disease was caused in consequence. The physician who reports the case refers to another which is on record, in which a German woman who wrote to two friends in France whilst she was convalescent from scarlet fever, undoubtedly transmitted thereby the disease to them, because they both developed scarlet fever, and both died. The probability of the fever being conveyed by means of books and playthings is of course well recognised, and the cases in question are therefore important by proving the necessity for the destruction of all materials, which cannot be absolutely disinfected, which have been used by scarlet fever patients, especially during the period of their convalescence, when the shedding of the powerfully contagious skin takes place.

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