

Medical Matters.

EPITHELIOMA.



ONE of the rarest forms of cancer, fortunately, is that which attacks the face, and usually the lips or gums. The treatment, as a rule, consists of the removal of the growth, as early as possible, and in many instances this is successful. But in long-standing cases, in which the growth is of considerable size, a new method of treatment has been recently adopted with very successful results. This consists of painting the affected part every second or third day with a solution composed of twenty grains of methylene violet and a drachm each of alcohol and glycerine. After this has been carried out for some time a twenty per cent. solution of chromic acid is substituted for a few days, and then the methylene violet is again employed. Collodion is painted on the surface after each application. It is claimed that extremely good results have been obtained by the treatment, without occasioning either pain or inconvenience to the patient, and great interest will be felt in its further and more extensive use.

THE INCREASE OF CANCER.

STATISTICS have been said to be capable of proving anything, and there are obvious fallacies in the present statistics relating to cancer. But the figures which have recently been published, both in England and in the United States, seem to show that there is a most remarkable increase in the number of persons now suffering from this disease, as compared with the numbers suffering some fifty years ago. It is, for example, certain that in this country one person out of one hundred and twenty-nine died from cancer in 1840, whereas in 1880 the proportion had risen to no less than one out of every twenty-eight. Of course these cases are more correctly diagnosed at present than fifty years ago, and many deaths which were attributed to other causes at the earlier date, may have been really due to cancer. But even this will hardly explain the immense discrepancy between the figures quoted, and, therefore, it must be regarded as certain that there has been an immense increase of the disease. A

curious further fact is that the number of deaths from Consumption have diminished almost as greatly as the deaths from cancer have increased. Very nearly the same figures as those above quoted are given by observers in the United States, and it therefore becomes a matter of immense importance to ascertain the reason of this startling increase. It has been asserted that cancer is more prevalent simply because it is a disease which occurs in the later years of life, and that improved sanitation and the decreased destructiveness of other diseases, which cause the present prolongation of life, are a very natural explanation of the greater frequency of cancer. It is, at any rate, a remarkable fact that, contrary to the ordinary opinion, cancer is least frequently found where the struggle for subsistence is hardest, the population densest, the general mortality highest, the average duration of life shortest—in other words, amongst the working classes; whereas the mortality from the disease is greatest amongst the agricultural community, where the standard of health is highest, and of life the easiest. In fact, it would appear that the great cause of cancer is high feeding and easy living. These are the conclusions, at any rate, at which those observers, who have most carefully studied the subject have unanimously arrived; and their importance cannot be exaggerated. Meanwhile, such conclusions almost go to prove that cancer is a natural result of great organic causes, and that, therefore, while it might be possible to prevent its occurrence, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to cure it. Closely connected with this subject are the remarkable statistics which have been recently published by a French physician concerning the question of heredity in cancer. He has been able to examine the records of twenty-three families, and has found that there were sixty-nine cases of cancer amongst these, or an average of three cases in each family. Of these sixty-nine cases, no less than fifty-seven were of cancer of the stomach, a very unusual percentage. In eleven families, the disease was transmitted entirely in the male line, and in five families the females were alone affected, while in the remaining six families both sexes were equally attacked.

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A Guarantee of Purity.

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