

Medical Matters.

EAR TROUBLES.



THE frequency with which obscure symptoms are due to the presence of some ear affection is well known amongst medical practitioners. A valuable article has recently been published, detailing instances in which patients suffering from some affection of the inner ear suddenly became faint and perhaps even lost consciousness. The writer points out that in these cases there is often a very marked degree of giddiness experienced before the fainting attack, and the connection of extreme giddiness with ear disease is a well recognised clinical fact. It is asserted that the marked peculiarities of fainting due to ear troubles are that the attack is sudden, and that there is a marked absence of that pallor which is so characteristic of syncope from heart disease. It is a curious fact that, in some people, the mere syringing of the ear with warm water or the introduction of a plug of cotton wool down the canal is sufficient to cause an attack of fainting—the only explanation of such an occurrence being that it is due to some reflex nerve disturbance of the heart's action.

MAGNETS.

A LAY contemporary in America evidently imagines that it has unearthed a remarkable medical discovery, because it devotes a large portion of its space to the description of the action of a gigantic electro-magnet in withdrawing particles of metal imbedded in the eye. It is well known of course to medical men that, in many instances, fine iron filings penetrate into the conjunctivæ of the eye from which they cannot be removed by the finest forceps, and that they may set up so much pain and inflammation that the patient is exhausted by the former, while the delicate structures of the eye are destroyed by the latter. In some instances, an ordinary large magnet is sufficient to remove the foreign body merely by its detractive power, but the strength of the instrument is enormously increased by the passage of an electric current through the iron. The method

adopted is very simple. The patient's eye is held open by the surgeon close to the point of the magnet through which the electric current is passed, and thus the most powerful drawing force is obtained. The instrument in use, for example, at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary possesses an attractive power estimated at sixteen pounds. The application of the magnet to the eye therefore draws to the surface any fragment of metal which has become imbedded, and in the great majority of instances will even draw the fragment out on to the point of the magnet.

REST AFTER FOOD.

ONE of the most frequently discussed questions in relation to digestion concerns the advisability, or otherwise, of resting after eating. It has been pointed out that animals sleep after feeding, and that many human beings become drowsy after a heavy meal. It is therefore argued that to sleep after a meal is natural, and therefore a probably useful digestive proceeding. As the majority of people do not exhibit this habit it can hardly be held to be essential to the process of digestion; and a French observer has recently studied the subject experimentally with results which certainly seem decisive. He analysed the contents of the stomach of a number of animals a few hours after a meal had been taken. In some cases, this was followed by sleep, and in others by forced repose in the horizontal position without sleep. His results show what might almost have been expected, as a matter of physiological common sense—namely, that, during sleep, the stomach ceases to move as it does during the wakeful state, and that the amount of gastric juice is increased. In other words, just as every other function of the body is temporarily quiescent during sleep, so the food in the stomach of a sleeping person ceases to be rapidly rotated and efficiently mixed with the gastric juice. So the process of digestion is delayed or rendered incomplete when sleep follows shortly after a meal. The same observer has found that rest, especially in the horizontal position, increases the movements of the stomach, but does not increase the acidity of the gastric juice. The moral is obvious, and proves once more the wisdom of our forefathers in their observance of the precept, "after dinner, rest awhile."

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