

Medical Matters.

BRAIN TUMOURS.



HITHERTO, the precise position of tumours in the brain has been determined by means of the pressure symptoms caused by these growths, and the science of localization has undoubtedly achieved considerable accuracy. The diagnosis of the nature of the tumour has largely depended on the patient's age and previous history. It would seem, however, to be possible that the Röntgen rays may throw light on this very obscure subject. Hitherto, attempts to photograph the brain have not met with much success—the substance of the brain being practically hidden by the clear definition of the skull bones; but within the last few months some Italian physicians have obtained photographs which certainly exhibit the marked outlines of tumours within the brain, and their process, they believe, is capable of such further improvements, as to produce so complete an outline of any new growth within the brain that not only its locality but its probable nature will be easily determined.

GREEN OYSTERS.

THE assertion has been widely made that any colouration in oysters, especially green or red, signifies the presence of some poisonous matter; and active discussion upon the subject has recently taken place in scientific circles in France. Unfortunately, however, it appears to be believed by our neighbours that the statement in question is only another instance of the perfidiousness of this country, because, forsooth, green oysters largely come from the coast of France! In connection with this question, and with the old scare of typhoid fever being conveyed by means of oysters, the interesting fact has been discovered that sea water is especially destructive of the typhoid bacillus, and that if there be any such infection present, fresh sea water will rapidly destroy it. The fact should allay the fear of typhoid infection, and at the same time suggest the advisability of keeping any suspicious molluscs in pure sea water for a few days before they are delivered to the consumer.

ACETYLENE.

THIS vapour has recently been recommended as a substitute for gas, and especially for employment in country houses where ordinary gas is not obtainable. It is stated to be very readily and cheaply prepared, the apparatus only consisting of a gasometer attached to a small generator in which calcium carbide is placed. Water is then added in small quantities to the salt, and acetylene gas and calcium oxide are produced. From the gasometer, the acetylene can be distributed by ordinary pipes throughout the house, and burned in the usual way. The flame of this gas is a brilliant white, and is much cooler than that of coal gas; its power of illumination is said to be sixteen times greater than that of ordinary coal gas. The disadvantages of acetylene are that while much less poisonous it is more inflammable and slightly more explosive. But its odour is so extremely unpleasant, that a very slight escape of it can be readily detected, and, therefore, in most cases measures would be taken to prevent a naked light being taken into a room in which such an escape of the vapour occurred. At any rate, the possibilities of the new illuminant seem to be very great, although it is doubtful whether the progress of electric lighting will not render gas illumination of any kind as antiquated and obsolete as the safety match has made the old flint and steel.

HOSPITAL VENTILATION.

A NOVEL plan of ventilation is to be employed in the construction of the new General Hospital at Calcutta. During the greater part of the year, the temperature of that unhealthy town varies from 85° to 95° while the dampness of the climate is proverbial. The system of ventilation to be used at the new Hospital practically consists of cooling and drying the air passed through screens of cotton wool into the wards, so as to establish a uniform temperature of from 75° to 80°. A further advantage of the plan will be that mosquitoes will also be excluded, and thus neither punkahs nor mosquito curtains will be needed—an increase of comfort as well as of economy which can only be appreciated by those who have been ill in a tropical climate. It is estimated that, by this process, the humidity of the air will be reduced from ninety to sixty per cent.

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