

## Medical Matters.

### DIET IN HEART DISEASE.



THIS important subject has been recently most carefully discussed by the American Medical Association. It is generally admitted that the dietary of patients, suffering from heart disease, is a most important item in their treatment; and that, while great harm can be done by improper food, danger can be prevented, and relief given, by careful dieting. When it is remembered, as was recently explained in these columns, that valvular diseases of the heart obstruct the circulation through the abdominal veins, and, therefore, to a large extent cause congestion of the stomach and intestines, as well as of the other internal organs, it is easy to understand that more or less catarrh and consequent irritability of the digestive tract is always present in these cases. While the tendency to dyspepsia is therefore increased in patients suffering from heart disease, their general bodily weakness requires that their digestion shall be maintained in as perfect a state as possible. As a general rule, then, while each case must be treated on its own merits, food should not be given too frequently, or in too large a quantity, in order that the stomach should be afforded the physiological rest demanded by its irritable condition. As a rule, also, patients with heart disease should not be allowed too much liquids. The quantity of blood which the vessels contain is a very important factor to the comfort and the well-being of the patient. If there be a large amount of blood, the difficulty of the heart's work is correspondingly increased; and if the amount of blood be lessened, the action of the heart is made so much the easier. When there is œdema of the limbs or body, it signifies Nature's effort to relieve the blood vessels of some superfluous fluid, and therefore—imitating Nature's methods—careful restriction of the diet to the smallest possible quantity of liquids usually affords rapid relief. As a rule, Starches, Sugars, and Fats are injurious, owing to their tendency to cause fermentation, and consequently flatulent distention of the abdomen, and thus upward pressure upon the heart. All nurses who have seen a patient with heart disease, sitting up in bed and gasping for

breath, because of such injurious upward pressure upon the chest, and the relief which is often afforded to such patients by a dose of bicarbonate of soda and peppermint, will realise the necessity of avoiding those articles of diet which cause such indigestion. It is, therefore, not too much to say that, while indiscretion, or even carelessness, in the diet can cause great discomfort, and even danger, to patients suffering from heart disease, a corresponding amount of care can afford great relief, and may even prevent attacks of dangerous syncope and dyspnoea.

### THE VACCINATION ACT.

THE medical profession is exhibiting the most active interest in the progress of the Vaccination Bill, as might have been expected. The Government have decided that any parent who makes a sworn statement that he objects, on conscientious grounds, to his children being vaccinated, shall not be liable, as hitherto has been the case, to any penalty for an infringement of the Act. In other words, vaccination ceases to be, in this country, a compulsory matter, and anyone who either neglects or refuses to have his children vaccinated, can, on the ground of conscience, escape all penalties. Every medical practitioner is aware that for one parent who refuses, on such a plea, to have his children vaccinated, there are at least a hundred, especially amongst the working classes, who would, unless pressure be brought to bear upon them, neglect the precaution merely from carelessness. It is, therefore, generally felt that the effect of the conscience clause will practically be to render the Vaccination Acts a dead letter, and, what the ultimate results of that will be, the history of recent epidemics conclusively shows. At first, perhaps, some authorities may insist upon parents, who do not conform to the Act, making the statutory conscience declarations. But, in a short time, this will so conclusively show itself to be a waste of time and energy, that proceedings will cease to be taken, and those who do not trouble to have their children vaccinated will simply be left to take the consequences. And these will be certainly disastrous to the whole community. The cost of an epidemic of small pox has been proved often enough to be enormous, both in life and treasure, and we fear that many epidemics will result from the present Act.

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