

Medical Matters.

IN-GROWING TOE-NAILS.



ONE of the most painful affections to which the foot is subject is that which is caused by the edge of the toe-nail growing downwards into the flesh at the side of the toe, instead of maintaining its position in the bed which Nature has made for it. It is almost invariably due to want of care in cutting the nail, and to the pressure of improperly fitting boots; the sharp edge of the closely-cut nail being thus forced into the adjoining tissues. In many cases, the carelessness which produced the condition permits it to continue until a deep sore is formed, which not only causes great suffering, but which is also most difficult to heal. As a general rule, when these cases come under the notice of the surgeon, the resulting ulceration is so deep and extensive, and the edge of the nail so firmly imbedded, that the most rapid and most successful method of treatment is to remove the nail altogether—a process, which it is needless to say is so exquisitely painful that it is necessary that an anæsthetic should be administered. The patient being then unconscious, a pair of fine pointed scissors are used, and the lower blade being pushed rapidly down under the base of the nail, in its centre, this is cut through, and with a strong pair of forceps, each half is dragged out. The wound rapidly heals under appropriate treatment, and in due course, a new nail grows up in the proper position. A French surgeon has lately stated that he has been able to cure all cases, however severe, without recourse to this operation. He describes his procedure as follows:—“With a flat probe, or a match, he slips a bit of cotton between the edge of the nail and the inflamed flesh. Another strip of cotton is put along the outer margin of the ulcerated area, and the space between these two strips of cotton, and which is occupied by the ulcer, is thickly powdered with nitrate of lead. The whole is covered with cotton, and the toe is bandaged. The dressings are repeated the following day, and every day until the incarcerated edge of the nail is plainly visible. Usually four or five dressings suffice. Then with patience the edge of the nail is lifted away from the flesh and a bit of cotton is introduced under it, to keep it up. As it grows it will

gradually take its proper position above the flesh, this having in the meantime shrunk and shrivelled by reason of the applications of lead nitrate. The lead is to be discontinued as soon as it appears that the exuberance of the fleshy bed of the nail has been overcome. The difficulty seldom recurs.”

SICK HEADACHES.

AN active correspondence has recently been taking place in French medical circles regarding the treatment of this common complaint, and a very considerable diversity of views has been expressed. By many, it has been held to be a nerve disorder, and nerve sedatives, therefore, are considered to be its natural treatment. In France, Caffeine and Phenacetine have been very largely employed, and in many cases with rapid relief. In Germany, methylene blue is perhaps the most popular treatment, and it is generally combined with nutmeg in order to avoid the irritating effect which the former drug often produces on the bladder. A mixture of Antipyrin and Caffeine is used very extensively in Austria, and both drugs alone, or combined, are largely prescribed in this country. In fact, the modern view of sick headache ascribes it chiefly to nerve derangement, and this idea is strengthened by the frequency with which such headaches occur in patients who are suffering from disturbances of vision. Some patients, for example, suffer from extreme headaches after much reading or any other cause of overstrain of the muscles of the eyeball; and many of these patients are only cured of their headaches when they are fitted with properly adjusted spectacles which prevent the strain in question. Still, when all the nerve headaches, which are so popular at the present day, are eliminated, there remain a large class whose sufferings are due to stomach or liver derangement. Our grandmothers, and especially our grandfathers, who were unacquainted with the name and symptoms of Neurasthenia, frequently indulged themselves with what were then popularly known as “bilious attacks”—the most prominent symptom of which, Headache, was associated with vomiting; and these were rapidly cured then, as practical physicians rapidly cure them now, by a dose of blue pill. This treatment, by the way, is especially useful amongst that large class of patients whose “sick-headaches” are more or less frequent in their occurrence, in consequence of their constitutional tendency to rheumatism or gout.

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