

Medical Matters.**EARACHE.**

ONE of the most common symptoms of childhood, and unfortunately one of the most neglected, is that to which the term "earache" is popularly applied. Most mothers look upon it as a matter of no importance, and young children are rarely, if ever, able to explain the precise position of the pain. The consequence is that in the majority of instances medical advice is not sought until the trouble which the pain denoted has increased so far that its treatment has become difficult, or, perhaps, even impossible. As a matter of fact, earache sometimes means only the formation of a boil in the canal of the outer ear, a condition which is painful, but quite temporary, and never dangerous. Unfortunately, in too many instances, pain in the ear denotes some disturbance in the auditory canal; it may be merely some alteration in the pressure of the air outside the drum of the ear, as compared with that admitted from the Eustachian tube in the throat into the inner ear itself—a matter which could be remedied in a minute by appropriate means, but which, if neglected, may cause inflammation and even irreparable disease. More frequently, pain is due to inflammation occurring in the course of scarlet fever, measles, or some other illness; and then the greatest care is required in order to save the hearing from being lost. In fact, there are few organs in which so much can be done to prevent disease, or in which neglected mischief is so serious, as in the case of the hearing apparatus. It is, therefore, a good general rule that earache should never be neglected. In this connection, nurses should always remember that cleanliness is as all important in the affections of the ear as in those of any other organ; and in those cases in which there is a discharge from the canal, it is beyond everything important that this should be free from any obstruction. There is a widely prevalent idea that a piece of cotton wool should be kept in the ear whenever there is any discharge from it; and the consequence, too often, is that small portions of the wool are left in the canal. These soddened with discharge, which rapidly decomposes, cause a most irritable eruption on the skin around the

opening which is most difficult to heal, and the irritation of which is often almost intolerable. Or, on the other hand, the retained wool may even form a plug which prevents the discharge from having free exit, and causes an accumulation of pus which may bring about necrosis of the bones of the ear, inflammation of the adjacent parts of the brain, and death.

BICYCLING FOR WOMEN.

BICYCLING has now passed out of the stage of a fashionable craze, and is accepted as a universal means of locomotion. Sufficient experience has been gained, in the last five years, to enable us to estimate fairly the dangers and advantages of bicycling for women. The subject has recently been most carefully discussed in the leading medical journals of Europe and America. Some writers have warmly advocated the advantages of cycling; a few have flatly denied them, and have attributed endless evils to the use of the machine. There is, however, a general consensus of opinion upon certain points. Briefly, it may be said that the advantages of the bicycle for women are very great, and that most of its dangers can be easily avoided. It is beyond dispute that it has been of incalculable value in persuading thousands of women, who would otherwise have sat all day in hot rooms, to ride for miles in the open air, and so develop their muscular powers and improve the condition both of their lungs and their digestion. In the next place, it has been of direct benefit by compelling riders to discard clothing which tightly compressed the chest and abdomen, and so prevented the proper action of the lungs and heart. It has thus undoubtedly prevented diseases which such unnatural constriction of the body causes. In fact, it is not improbable that the bicycle may bring about improvements in the dress of women which endless reformers have striven unsuccessfully to accomplish. With regard to the dangers of cycling, those who suffer from advanced lung or heart disease, or who have certain pelvic disorders, must, of course, be debarred from the exercise altogether. But healthy women, if they exercise due carefulness, and, above all things, if they do not overstrain their powers by riding too fast, or up steep hills, obtain benefits from the bicycle, which, both as regards their muscular and nervous systems, it is impossible in many cases to exaggerate.

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