

Medical Matters.**LEAD POISONING.**

CONSIDERABLE attention has recently been given to the subject of poisoning by lead. The symptoms are well known, and are usually well-marked. The patient suffers from increasing constipation, and sooner or later from violent attacks of colic, due probably, in some measure to the action of the poison, upon the nervous system, but still more to the blocking of the intestines. Sooner or later, a well-marked blue line appears along the edge of the gums and teeth; and, in advanced cases, the paralytic effect of the lead upon the nervous system is exhibited by various signs, but especially by the well-known "wrist drop"—the muscles extending the hand becoming more or less paralysed, and the hand therefore falling when the arm is raised. It is an old observation, that persons suffering from lead poison, or Plumbism as it is called, are very liable to attacks of Gout or Rheumatism; the presence of lead in the system preventing the excretion of various salts, and causing their deposit in the tissues. It is generally believed that the only people affected with this form of poisoning are those who work in the lead factories, and that the precautions nowadays adopted have to a large extent prevented the occurrence of these cases. But, as a matter of fact, patients are not very infrequently found to be suffering from the symptoms of lead poisoning whose occupation and methods of life would seem to render the possibility of such poisoning remote or even impossible. It is therefore necessary to remember that these cases are often traced to some defect in the lead pipes used for drinking water, or in the utensils employed for cooking. The cheapness of the metal, and the ease with which it can be moulded into any shape that is desired, make lead piping largely used for domestic water-supply; and, on the other hand, it is urged that in comparatively few cases does the water become impregnated with the metal, while passing through these tubes. The action of water upon lead is supposed to be caused by the presence of various salts and especially of carbonic acid in the former; a chemical change taking place and a certain amount of the metal being dissolved in the water. It is

generally believed that London water, being very hard, has no action upon lead at all; but there are historical cases on record in which outbreaks of lead poisoning have proved that fact to be doubtful. The conclusion is that safety can only be secured by employing other materials than ordinary lead pipes for domestic water supplies.

NATURE versus CIVILIZATION.

A VALUABLE Report has recently been published concerning the climate of Hawaii, and the healthiness of its inhabitants. It is asserted that there is no more delightful or salubrious place on the face of the globe; and that, owing to its insular position and its latitude, the extremes of heat and cold are alike unknown, and that hurricanes and typhoons never occur. Before the advent of civilization, the population was large and increasing. Since then, in consequence of the introduction of infectious fevers, the native population has several times been decimated. An epidemic of measles which was introduced from California in 1848 committed the most terrible ravages; not so much in consequence of the dangerous nature of the malady as because of the fact that the natives, having no proper treatment, sought to alleviate their feverishness by frequent baths in their mountain streams or in the sea. In consequence of this, large numbers were attacked with diseases of the lungs to which they rapidly succumbed. It is a curious instance of the fact that misfortunes rarely come alone, that, before the islands were free from Measles, an epidemic of Influenza occurred. And before this had disappeared, the Californians sent the islanders some choice examples of whooping cough. From the three epidemics, to each one of which the natives were previously strangers, it is hardly a matter for surprise that many thousands died. It is a generally admitted fact that races which are not, so to speak, acclimatised by heredity to infectious diseases, suffer a much greater mortality than is found amongst people whose forefathers had, generation after generation, endured similar attacks. Even without imprudent bathing, it is probable, therefore, that the Hawaiians would have exhibited a great mortality during the first epidemic of measles which visited their shores. On the other hand, it is equally probable that future outbreaks of the same fever will not prove nearly so disastrous or fatal to these islanders.

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