

## Medical Matters.

### THE DANGERS OF COCAINE.



A VALUABLE paper has recently been published, giving in succinct form a review of the dangers which have been shown to exist in connection with the use and the abuse of Cocaine. In one instance, death followed the injection of a 5 per cent. solution for operation on the eyelid. Consciousness was lost in ten minutes, the respiration stopped, and the face became cyanosed. The patient was partly resuscitated, but died in the evening. In another case, internal urethrotomy being proposed, a 20 per cent. solution was introduced into the urethra by a long-nozzled syringe, which passed about four inches. Immediately, there were toxic symptoms—twitching of the face, staring eyes, dilated pupils, frothing at the mouth, congested face, laboured respiration, and finally epileptiform convulsions. The heart became irregular and slow, the entire body cyanosed. Death occurred in twenty minutes. In two other urethral cases, the fatal doses were 1 grain and  $\frac{1}{3}$  grain. A 4 per cent. solution applied to a blistered surface, and, in a rectal case,  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a grain in two doses, have also been fatal. Its use in dentistry has caused several deaths. A healthy woman, aged twenty-nine, died after the injection of  $\frac{1}{3}$  grain for extraction, which was painless. In another case which proved fatal, 4 grains were injected into the gums. Several cases are also reported in which symptoms of poisoning were produced. The application of cocaine solution to the nose and throat does not appear to have ever been fatal, but several cases of toxic effects are recorded. A 4 per cent. solution, applied to the nasal cavities, has produced vertigo and syncope, and even a 2 per cent. solution has caused severe symptoms. Toxic effects do not follow as readily from its use in the mouth and throat, because the absorbent power is less than that of the Schneiderian membrane. Spraying the throat for fifteen minutes, with a 2 per cent. solution, produced in one patient weakness of the lower limbs, staggering and unconsciousness, lasting several hours. A 4 per cent. solution, applied to the tonsil, has also been followed by dangerous symptoms. A remote danger from the use of the drug is the development of the cocaine habit, which is undoubtedly a serious

evil. It most frequently results from the use of the drug in affections of the nose and throat. The evil is as great as the morphia habit. Among the effects are rapidly-increasing wasting, hallucinations and insomnia.

### WOUNDS OF THE HEART.

It is well known now that wounds of the Heart are not necessarily fatal. In this column, authenticated cases have been recorded from time to time; and a case recently reported also deserves to be noted. The patient was a man aged twenty-six, who received a stab in the precordial region. The wound was clean-cut beneath the fifth rib, and was situated one-and-a-half inches from the middle of the sternum. It was three inches deep, and penetrated the lung, pericardium, and apex of the heart. There was very marked collapse. Five days later, empyema on the left side was diagnosed, and an incision was made in the eighth intercostal space; a large amount of breaking-down blood-clot was evacuated. The discharge continued to be very profuse for a long time, and three months had elapsed from the time of the accident before the man could be considered to be convalescent. Ultimately, he made a good recovery. A recent writer has collected 401 cases of wounds of the heart, of which recovery had taken place in 50 cases. Several cases have also been recorded where patients have survived for considerable periods with foreign bodies lodged in the heart.

### CANCER.

At the Medical Congress held at Amsterdam recently, Dr. Robert Bell, of Glasgow, read a paper on the pathogenesis of cancer, more especially of cancer of the breast in women. Dr. Bell advances the theory that cancer is due to the migration of a cell, or cells, from some other portion of the body, that this multiplies, and invades other tissues, causing the disease. He does not believe in the microbic origin of cancer, holding that microbic diseases are destructive, whereas, in the case of cancer, there is a marked access of vigour of the part affected. This is the statement made in the daily press, and it is added that the paper was well received. But professional readers in this country will wait until they see the full text of the paper before they can judge whether Mr. Robert Bell has made a discovery, or has merely restated a well-known fact.

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