

Medical Matters.**A CHLOROFORM DANGER.**

IMPORTANT articles upon chloroform decomposition in the presence of a flame have recently been published, and possess very considerable interest for nurses. The *Medical Times* quotes the experiences of an American surgeon, who was administering chloroform to a patient in labour in a small room (12 feet by 13 feet by 8½ feet) where three gas flames were burning. In a short time, those present felt an irritating sensation in the throat and chest, resulting in incessant coughing and gasping for breath, which became so violent that the operation—the application of forceps—could not be proceeded with. The cause of the symptoms was not recognised. The operation was concluded under ether, because prolonged anæsthesia was necessary. A far more serious result occurred to another medical man, when the surgeons and nurses were overcome by the fumes of decomposing chloroform, and one nurse died, on the second day after the operation, from broncho-pneumonia. A writer in our contemporary states that he has on three occasions been obliged to desist from administering chloroform and even the A.C.E. mixture in the presence of an open flame. Once, at an operation in the evening for strangulated ventral hernia in an old lady, aged seventy-four, where a gas flame was within about four feet of the patient's face, the room rapidly filled with the fumes of carbonyl chloride gas, which is probably the cause of the bronchial irritation. The two surgeons, as well as the writer, experienced the most severe choking sensations, from which they did not quite recover till the next day. When the irritant first began to form, various methods of ventilation were tried, first at the top of the windows, then at the bottom; these efforts had no effect in dissipating the poison, for it did not seem to be heavy enough to sink towards the floor by its own weight, nor rise with the heated air. The patient, whose face was covered with a Skinner's chloroform mask, did not exhibit any signs of irritation of the bronchi, either at the time or afterwards; though the surgeon and the anæsthetist coughed violently and spasmodically, during a railway journey, the whole way home. Even a gas fire in the room may produce this much to be dreaded compli-

cation, and on a second occasion the first signs of its formation were given by the patient, who began to cough rather violently under A. C. E. mixture before those around detected the chlorine-like smell which is characteristic of it. A very small amount once formed seems to rapidly increase, and in such cases the immediate substitution of ether for chloroform is advised unless the open flame of the gas, lamp, candle, or stove can be extinguished, or complete and safe ventilation resorted to.

CONDEMNED MEAT.

THE system adopted by the authorities in the City of London for the disposal of diseased meat has recently been explained. Probably, few are aware of the fate of the large number of carcasses condemned by meat inspectors. When it is considered that the officers of the City Corporation have seized in a single week as many as sixty tons of bad meat, it will be seen that, unless it is utilised, the waste in the course of a year would be enormous. But there is no waste, and every carcase fetches a price. It is a relief to learn, at the outset, that elaborate precautions are taken to prevent a dishonest contractor from selling as human food any of this condemned flesh. Immediately after the condemnation, the meat is taken into a shed and plunged into chemical baths, the action of which is to render it so unsightly that no one could possibly buy it for food. After this bath, it is put into special carts, in the bottom of which is a deodorising fluid, and, with padlocked doors, is carried away to the contractor's premises. The next stage is the breaking up of the meat, performed by a machine invented by the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Saunders, and known as "Saunders' Devil." The product turned out by this machine, an exaggerated mince-meat, is then put into evaporating pans, and the temperature raised to a point at which the fat liquefies. The fat, which is a valuable commercial article, is used for the manufacture of cheap soaps, and railway and cart grease. From the rest of the meat, ammonia is obtained, which sells from £8 to £15 a ton, and is used for manufacturing purposes. The bones of the animals are sold for making knife handles, and articles of similar description. That this business of meat inspection is a very vital one to the community may be realised from Dr. Saunders' statement that he generally has several men on the sick list from the effects of merely "handling" diseased meat.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)