

to apply a plaster over the heart, will so place it that only its upper edge is over the apex, as though that were the top of the heart, and the organ projected down into the abdomen. The lower edge, then, of the plaster should be applied on the level of the impulse of the heart; the outer edge of the plaster should be inside the nipple so as to prevent the irritation of the organ, which is generally caused by the application of the plaster over its surface. By this disposition the ordinary small plaster will cover completely the whole area of the chest over the heart, and its local effect, therefore, will be rendered as great as possible.

In the next place, it is always important to observe very carefully any sign of skin irritation which may be caused by the application, or any evidence of poisoning from its use. Many patients have a peculiar idiosyncrasy in respect of belladonna, and while some exhibit this in the shape of acute inflammation of the skin, and a condition almost resembling erysipelas, others display the dilated pupil, the dryness of the mouth and throat, and the tendency to vomiting which are characteristic of belladonna poisoning. Such signs, therefore, should be carefully watched for, and, in the event of their occurrence, the nurse should immediately remove the plaster, and carefully cleanse the skin from any belladonna which may be adhering to its surface, reporting of course, at once to the doctor. If, as sometimes happens, the symptoms of poisoning are very acute, the nurse should send for medical assistance at once, and may in such a case, give the patient some strong coffee or a dose of brandy, until the doctor arrives. Fortunately, however, trained nurses would take measures to prevent the continuance of the poisoning as has been suggested, and thus it is comparatively rare that dangerous symptoms are allowed to develop. For the same reason, when belladonna is given to these patients by the mouth, the nurse must exercise equal watchfulness over the effects, and note and report these to the practitioner, discontinuing the medicine at once if any of the symptoms already mentioned are observed, until fresh instructions can be obtained as to its future administration.

It is essential, however, that the nurse should not in such cases, permit the patient to guess that anything is wrong. Any suspicion that he evinced symptoms of poisoning would probably cause death in many patients suffering from serious heart mischief.

(To be continued.)

Medical Matters.

HYPNOTISM AS A DEFENCE.



DURING an action for damages brought against the Edison Electric Lighting Company, in New Jersey, U.S.A., by a workman, the strange plea that the plaintiff was suffering from the effects of hypnotism was raised by the defendants. The alleged cause of action was that during a storm the plaintiff was struck by a falling arc-light wire and greatly injured. Medical witnesses gave evidence that, on admission to the Hospital, the patient showed every symptom of shock, but that there was nothing external to show the existence of any burn on the body. The defendant company denied that the plaintiff had come in contact with any of their wires, or that any accident had happened, and brought evidence to prove that the sole cause of the peculiar symptoms from which the patient suffered were hypnotic suggestions. Dr. W. K. Newton, a well-known authority on mental diseases, swore that he examined the plaintiff at the hospital, and having come to the conclusion that he was under the influence of hypnotism, brought his tests to bear upon him to prove this. The tests used were bathing the arms in hot and cold water alternately, telling the patient that the hot was cold and the cold hot, and the patient failing to identify the temperature of the water used. Cold water was placed on the arm, and the patient was told that it was a powerful acid, and that it would produce great pain. Apparently, intense suffering was caused to the patient by this application, and the defence raised in Court had the desired effect. This defence was certainly unique, but will probably be imitated in our Courts.

POISONING BY PERMANGANATE OF POTASSIUM.

Permanganate of Potassium is not a generally recognised poison, and has rarely if ever been previously used for suicidal purposes. A case has lately been reported of a woman, who, whilst suffering from the effects of intoxication, took an unknown quantity of crystals of permanganate of potassium, put them in a teacup and, adding some beer, drank off the mixture. As she was noticed to have done this, she was taken by the police to St. Thomas's Hospital. Vomiting took place almost immediately, and, on admission, signs of collapse were found.

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