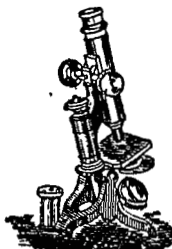


## Medical Matters.

### TRUE AUTO-INTOXICATION.



The absorption of toxic material from the intestines is often spoken of as autotoxæmia. As a matter of fact, however, the intestines are outside of the body proper, and so it cannot be properly spoken of as a self-poisoning. There is, however, a true autotoxæmia due to the production of substances in the tissues themselves that are toxic for other parts of the organism. Such autotoxin occurs quite abundantly in certain constitutional diseases, notably gout and affections due to the uric acid diathesis. In diabetes also, especially that form known as pancreatic diabetes, and in which diabetic coma is so liable to assert itself, there is a distinct tendency to the production of poisonous substances as a result of errors of metabolism. Uræmic coma is a manifestation of the same kind, being due to something much more serious than the mere prevention of elimination through the kidneys.

### TREATMENT OF INSOMNIA.

Dr. L. L. Skelton has written a most helpful paper on this subject for *Merck's Archives*.

He places the various causes of insomnia under the following heads:—(1) Interferences with the normal withdrawal of stimuli of irritation of the sensory nerves; (2) irritation from visceral organs; (3) over-activity, irritable exhaustion of the cerebral neurons; (4) intoxications of the cerebral neurons; (5) hereditary unbalanced and irritable neurons. In the general management of a case of insomnia, we can utilise one or more of the following agencies:—1. The induction of muscle-fatigue by walks in the open-air or by massage. Many people cannot sleep because their muscles are not tired and their nervous system is over-excited. 2. The clearing away of intestinal and hepatic accumulations by sodium sulphate and salicylate, combined or not with potassium citrate and lithia. This serves several purposes. Auto-intoxication is diminished, irritation from distended viscera is diminished, and circulatory equilibrium is aided. 3. The use of a hot bath. 4. Proper sleeping rooms. In regard to the exact action of hypnotics and narcotics on the nerve-cell, it is to be remembered that, first, the nerve-cell is especially rich in fat;

second, that the narcotic action of alcohols and chlorine compounds is proportionate to their fat solubility; third, that fusion and diminution of the granules of the cell occur after the use of narcotics; fourth, that these changes in the cell may interfere with function by altered chemical composition of cell-contents directly, or by causing a retraction of dendritic processes and interrupting neurotic continuity. It is important to remember that all drugs of this class interfere with normal metabolism, that they are purely symptomatic in usefulness, that all are objectionable by reason of secondary and side effects, and that they are used by reason of ignorance of the underlying cause of the symptoms or our inability to control these causes. In a general way we may formulate the indications for their use, viz.: Insomnia from pain: morphine, coal-tar products and large doses of chloral. Insomnia from increased reflex irritability: chloral, trional, sulphonal. Insomnia from delirium and chronic insanity: hyoscyamine combined with morphine. Insomnia from "nervousness," "worry": bromides, given in sufficient doses—20 grains three or four times in the daytime—are incomparably the best and safest hypnotic. It is to be reflected that morphine increases reflex irritability. The chlorals depress the medulla, and are dangerous in heart and vascular diseases, and lung, kidney, and stomach irritability.

### THE TREATMENT OF CANCER.

Dr. Robert Bell, consulting physician to the Glasgow Hospital for Women, advances the view that the origin of cancer is overfeeding, accentuated by neglect of the ordinary laws of health. It is a circumscribed manifestation of a blood affection rather than a local disease. A man may, he believes, go through life with cancer latent in the blood, and yet never develop it. The predisposing cause is a vitiated condition of the blood, due to a faulty action of certain glandular bodies. But an exciting cause, such as a blow or other form of irritation, is often necessary. From these premises Dr. Bell deduces that cancer being a disease of the constitution, cannot adequately be dealt with by the knife only. Surgical measures need to be supplemented by medical and dietetic treatment which attack the root of the mischief. It is then possible that a cure may result. Conditions favourable to the development of the disease are, living in unsanitary houses or upon a damp soil.

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