

Medical Matters.

THE LEPROSY BACILLUS.



The *British Medical Journal* reports that in a paper in an Indian contemporary Captain Rost, Indian Medical Service, claims to have grown the leprosy bacillus and to have successfully treated the disease by inoculation with "leprosin," made on the same lines as tuberculin; more recently telegrams have appeared in the Indian papers from Rangoon announcing that twenty-nine cases of leprosy have been cured by this method. As the material is being sent out for trial, further reports may be expected shortly, and, if confirmed, the discovery will be a very important one.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF DETECTION AND RELIEF OF EYE-STRAIN.

Dr. Ambrose L. Ranney, in the *New England Medical Monthly*, presents a comprehensive series of conclusions and deductions, some of which are as follows:—Eye-strain can be a potent factor in disturbing the normal development of both mind and body, and in causing and perpetuating physical ills. Near-sightedness, when uncomplicated, causes little or no eye-strain. An imperfect centring of a strong myopic glass to the pupils may create great nervous disturbance, however, because of prismatic effects. Far-sightedness and astigmatism should be recognised early in life and corrected by glasses. Both cause an unnatural expenditure of nervous force in proportion to the extent of the defect. Mal-adjustment of the eye muscles may exist as an independent deformity. It is a most prolific cause of physical and mental ills. Imperfect mental or physical development is very apt to be associated with some type of eye-strain. No child should ever be allowed to begin its education without preliminary testing of the eyes and also of the eye muscles. The full amount of mal-adjustment of the eye muscles is not usually disclosed, because sufferers of this class unconsciously acquire "tricks of adjustment." A very large proportion of eye defects is congenital. Eye-strain predisposes to the development of cataract and other eye diseases. The writer believes that many inmates of institutions for the feeble-minded, insane hospitals, and epileptic colonies owe to eye-strain their confinement or social ostracism. This state-

ment is based upon carefully-collected clinical data. Legislative enactment should compel an eye examination of every child before it enters the public schools.

THE RED-LIGHT TREATMENT OF SMALL-POX.

Dr. T. F. Ricketts, Medical Superintendent of the Metropolitan Asylums Board Small-pox Hospitals at Long Reach and Joyce Green, reporting to the Board, said:—During the past year we have been afforded an opportunity of testing the value of the treatment of small-pox by red light. This treatment was recommended to the profession by Dr. Finsen, of Copenhagen, who introduced the light treatment of lupus, from which so much benefit has been derived. It was claimed by Dr. Finsen that the exclusion of all but red light from the wards in which small-pox patients were being treated had the effect of preventing the suppurative of the vesicles, of preventing pitting, of abolishing the suppurative fever, and of lowering the mortality. To test these claims, a small ward at the Long Reach Hospital was, in effect, converted into a "dark room" such as is used in photographic manipulations. This was effected by covering the windows with ruby fabric, and by screening the entrances to the ward with thick curtains of Turkey twill. At night the only illumination was by means of a red lamp. About a dozen patients were treated in this room, one or two at a time, the cases being carefully selected, partly as being in a very early stage of the disease, and partly as being likely to develop suppurative in the lesions or to exhibit a suppurative fever. Without going into details, it may be stated that in no instance did the development of the eruption and the progress of the case differ from what would have been expected had the patients been treated in an ordinary ward. Three of the patients died, several of them were badly pitted, and the suppurative fever developed in all such patients as would ordinarily have been subject to it. Moreover, it seemed to the observers that in some instances the gloom of the ward had a deleterious effect on the general condition of the patients. On the other hand, it was thought (as, indeed, might have been expected) that the patients did well in respect of affections of the eye. The experiment must therefore be regarded as a failure; and I do not propose to ask the Board to adapt any wards, in this (Joyce Green) hospital to this purpose.

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