

Medical Matters.



CHRONIC X-RAY DERMATITIS.

A disease which is at present causing something like consternation is X-ray dermatitis, whose victims are persons, whether operators or mechanics, who are habitually working with these rays. It chiefly attacks the hands, and begins with irritation, then ugly-looking ulcers are formed, and the disease gradually creeps up the arms to the trunk. It is terribly painful, and runs a very chronic course. Sub-acetate of lead lotion appears to afford relief. It is believed that the younger operators who are at present immune can take adequate protective methods now that the danger is known. Nearly all the opaque metals used as gauntlets, and even as armour, afford safe protection, but steel is preferable. The latest victims to the disease are said to be the nurses who assist at operations and experiment under the rays.

A curious feature of this disease is that all its present victims contracted it from three to five years ago, and, thinking nothing of it, have allowed it to spread without an attempt at checking it; thus the action of the powerful agent which heals the sick, and, at the same time maybe, smites the doctor and nurse with a terrible disease, has passed comparatively unnoticed, although it is of course known that Dr. Blacker, of St. Thomas's Hospital, after acute suffering for many months, died from its effects.

Yet the benefit of the X-rays is unmistakable, and first for diagnostic and then for curative purposes they have been largely used, epithelioma, rodent ulcer, and kindred diseases being brought under their influence with most beneficial results.

The action of the rays, according to a high medical authority, effects the cure of epithelioma by liquefaction and disintegration of the malignant tissues, which are completely destroyed, showing the selective action of the rays upon cancerous tissue. The æsthetic results are excellent, and cure may be considered as absolute when the treatment is pushed far enough.

It now remains for science to discover how to relieve the sufferings of those who, not realising the potency of the agent which they were handling, are now suffering from its effects. One thing is certain, that in the future

those applying the X-ray treatment must invariably wear gauntlets, and not pass their uncovered hands across the ray.

APPENDICITIS IN CHILDREN.

Dr. A. J. McCosh, of New York, says that the disease in children differs very widely and in certain various specific details from its characteristic appearance in adults. One has practically to depend for diagnosis in children upon the occurrence of persistent vomiting in the absence of food. Pain, because of the characteristic vagaries of a child, is of little or no value. The leucocyte count has been stated on very high authority to be valueless in the diagnosis of appendicitis in children. The differential diagnosis has to be made from gastro-enteritis, from basal pneumonia, and from diaphragmatic pleurisy. Dr. McCosh states unconditionally that upon the testimony of persistent vomiting alone in suitable chosen cases, diagnosis for appendicitis can be reached, the symptom alone being enough to justify immediate operation. He gives a large number of statistics showing the frequency of appendicitis in children, basing his statistics upon his last thousand cases. Over 50 per cent. had occurred between the ages of twenty and thirty-five years, after which period the occurrence of appendicitis becomes rapidly less. Before ten years of age 7 per cent. of his patients had had appendicitis, while his youngest patient had been a babe of twelve months.

In the case of children it is especially important for the nurse to observe and report symptoms, as they may otherwise be overlooked.

PSEUDO-PARASITES IN CANCER.

At the International Dermatological Congress in Berlin, Dr. Unna submitted the conclusions which he had come to with regard to the nature of the so-called X-cells, which have been held by some to be of a parasitic nature. He states that all carcinomata contain them in varying quantity, form and size. They appear to have the same structure and staining reaction as similar cells found in condylomata. He considers it proved by the transformations which they are seen to undergo that they are degenerating prickly cells. When these cells have lost their connection with the other prickly cells of the stratum mucosum, they are easily mistaken for amoeboid cells. They must be, sharply distinguished from the hyaline bodies of carcinoma.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)