

## Medical Matters.



### TYPHOID SERUM.

What were considered encouraging statistics in regard to the use of serum in the treatment of typhoid were read before the Medical Congress at Paris by Professor Chantemesse. He stated that the use of serum had been continued for three years and a-half under his direction in the military hospital.

During this period 545 cases of typhoid had been treated with serum, twenty-two ending fatally, the rate of mortality thus being 4 per cent., whereas the general rate for the Paris hospitals, where the patients were treated in the ordinary way by cold baths and drugs, was 18 per cent.

The President of the Congress, Professor Cernil, warmly congratulated Professor Chantemesse on the magnificent results obtained by himself and other physicians, thanks to his discovery. Eighteen per cent. of deaths from enteric fever is certainly very high, but good nursing, and neither drugs nor serums has been the means in this country of reducing it considerably. The mortality from enteric fever in the hospitals under the Metropolitan Asylums Board in 1903 was 15.39 per cent., varying from 19.58 per cent. at the South-Western to 3.17 at the Park Hospital. We recommend well-trained, educated nurses to the Paris faculty if they are anxious to reduce their enteric death-rate.

### PIGMENTATION OF THE SKIN.

Some speculations by Dr. Schmitt, a German biologist, on the pigmentation of the skin and the colour of abnormal perspiration suggest the possibility that the Ethiopian could by chemical means change his skin. Dr. Schmitt has found in the skin a ferment of the class known as oxidases as well as other ferments called reducing ferments, which can remove from nitrates a portion of their oxygen. He also found in the skin of white people a colouring pigment which he calls "uromelanin," and which is analogous to the pigment melanin in the negro's skin. As everyone knows, white people when their skin is exposed to the sun's rays redden or become bronzed, a phenomenon which Dr. Schmitt ascribes to the presence of "uromelanin" pigments which are more soluble than melanin, and unlike melanin, are

not precipitated by the acids of the perspiration. If the perspiration is abundant and alkaline, the colouring pigment, which is soluble in alkalies, is carried outside the skin. But suppose the perspiration remains constantly acid. Then the oxidising ferments of which mention has been made, being stimulated by the sun's rays, oxidise the colouring matters to the highest degree, and the acid of the perspiration precipitates them in the skin. The acidity neutralises, in short, the alkaline matter which would dissolve the pigment or make it less permanent. From which, if Dr. Schmitt is right, we ought to be able to bleach the negro by giving him drugs to make his perspiration alkaline. Even so, according to yet another biologist, he would still be always distinguishable as a negro, for between the negro and the white man there is one ineradicable mark of race. The cartilage at the end of the nose of the white man is divided or split, as anyone can test by placing a finger on the tip of that organ; but in the negro nose this split does not exist. Nor does it exist in mulattoes.

### THE TREATMENT OF TRACHEOTOMY WOUNDS IN DIPHTHERIA.

Dr. A. E. Jones says, in the *British Journal of Children's Diseases*, that "the main lines of treatment are the following:—1. The wound should be kept as aseptic as possible. It should always be covered with a double layer of aseptic gauze, which can be conveniently fastened at one corner to the sternum either by a spot of collodion or by a strip of Unna's zinc strapping. 2. The tube should be removed at as early a date as possible, more especially if any of the laryngeal cartilages be injured. One can usually take out the silver tube after twenty-four hours, and, if another tube be required later on for a few hours more, a rubber one should be inserted. 3. Every effort should be made to calm and reassure the child, and in some cases the administration of bromide of potassium is of use in very excitable children. 4. The only contra-indication to the use of heroic measures if the wound does not spontaneously close is a poisoned and dilated heart; when this is present, one has to be very careful and proceed at intervals."

Much depends upon good nursing in a case of tracheotomy. Not only must the wound be kept scrupulously clean but the tube must be kept clear. Happily the violent feathering common a decade since is now a thing of the past.

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