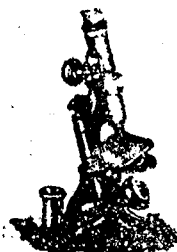


Medical Matters.

THE TREATMENT OF CORPULENCE.



This matter has fallen so largely into the hands of quacks that it is at present being carefully discussed in the medical journals of several foreign countries. One of the most common quack remedies is the administration of tablets composed of the thyroid glands of sheep, which, as our readers are probably all aware, is the modern and most successful method of treatment of more than one disease. During the administration of this substance, in most people, a rapid loss of flesh and weight occurs; but, in many instances, in which the tablets were given for corpulency, the general health has been so affected that serious illness has resulted. Some people, indeed, show a strong idiosyncrasy against the drug, and are apparently poisoned more or less seriously by it. In some cases, this has been proved to be due to decomposition of the organic substance and the production, therefore, of ptomaine poisoning. A careful series of experiments on the subject has been made in Germany, and it has been found that under definite conditions and careful feeding, tablets of thyroid glands can be administered for some weeks at a time with entire safety; but, to effect this, it is essential that the patient shall have no idiosyncrasy against the drug, that the drug shall be perfectly pure, that the dosage shall be small to commence with, and gradually increased, and that the patient shall be fed largely with nitrogenous material whilst the treatment is carried out. In fact, the precautions which are necessary in carrying out the thyroid treatment are proved by this investigation to be so important that it is not probable that it will ever be adopted by the medical profession simply and solely for the reduction of obesity. The common-sense treatment of corpulency, and that which is usually adopted in this country, is by means of a careful diet, from which fats and starches are as nearly as possible eliminated, and which, therefore, causes more or less rapid absorption of the surplus fat of the system, in order to maintain the body heat which the dietary does not provide. This is effected, for example, by a diet restricted to lean meat, toast in restricted quantities, and three or four pints of hot water *per diem*, under which a loss in weight of nearly a pound a day frequently occurs, whilst the patient's general health, as a rule, is markedly improved.

BELLADONNA POISONING.

A method of treatment which is almost what is termed a "household remedy" is the use of a Belladonna Plaster, and it is, certainly, a measure which is frequently adopted without medical advice. It is well, therefore, for nurses to remember that there are many cases on record in which definite symptoms of poisoning have arisen in consequence of the absorption of Belladonna from such an application. These cases have shown symptoms varying from a simple skin eruption to coma; and in several instances the patient has died before proper treatment could be employed. The chief symptoms which have been reported in connection with these cases of poisoning are therefore worthy of note; and nurses should be on the watch for any similar symptoms when a belladonna plaster has been ordered for a patient; and should at once remove the plaster and very carefully cleanse the skin with ether and olive oil immediately any premonitory symptom of poisoning shows itself. The most simple and most common cases on record are those in which the absorption was just sufficient to cause the symptoms produced by a large dose of belladonna; such, for example, as marked dryness of the mouth and throat, and dilation of the pupils. These signs should always be looked upon, therefore, as the first danger signals in such a case. As a rule, of course, the cases of poisoning which have been reported in the medical press are those in which the symptoms have been more severe. For example, a woman had a small belladonna plaster placed over her heart for the relief of violent palpitation. Two hours afterwards, she complained of her mouth and throat being extremely dry; then it was noted that the pupils had become dilated, then she became extremely excited and finally a rose-red rash came out on her face, trunk and arms. The plaster was then carefully removed, but it was necessary to give medicines before the patient recovered. It is of interest to remember that belladonna often produces a diffuse rose-red rash, not unlike that of scarlet fever, the similarity being increased by the dryness and soreness of the throat, but an easy distinction being made in consequence of the temperature being normal when belladonna is the cause, instead of being raised to 102 or 103 degrees when it is due to scarlet fever. From the simple case just narrated, the symptoms of poisoning develop, if the cause of the trouble is not understood, from mere mental excitement up to active delirium, closely resembling that of acute mania, and going on to coma, and the death of the patient.

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