

Medical Matters.

PRECAUTIONS AGAINST THE PLAGUE.



It is estimated that a quarter of a million Mohammedans have died of plague in the Punjab solely because they refused to evacuate infected villages, on the ground that Mohammedans are forbidden to flee from the wrath of God.

The principal maulvis (law doctors) of the Punjab have now issued a fatwa (judicial decision) declaring that the Koran expressly enjoins Mohammedans to quit places smitten by Allah with disease. The Government has welcomed this proclamation, and has offered to facilitate the printing and publishing of an unlimited number of copies.

THE TREATMENT OF GOUT.

At a recent meeting of the Berlin Medical Society, the *Lancet* reports that Dr. Falkenstein read a paper on the Treatment of Gout by Hydrochloric Acid. He said that gout was caused by a diminished secretion of hydrochloric acid in the stomach, a condition which was of a primary nature and not, as in cancer, anæmia, and leukæmia, of a secondary nature. He had administered in gout from 50 to 60 drops of concentrated hydrochloric acid daily. When taken sufficiently diluted and together with the food these large doses were unobjectionable because the hydrochloric acid was at once neutralised by the alkaline and albuminous substances contained in the food. The acid must be taken continuously for years and not only during a gouty attack. In mild cases of gout complete recovery had followed an early administration of the remedy. In chronic cases the patient's general state was improved, but although some slight attacks might be benefited through the acid hindering the formation of new deposits, it nevertheless had no effect on those already existing. In the discussion Professor Kraus confirmed the statement that gouty inflammation might be relieved by the administration of hydrochloric acid during the interval between attacks, but that it was useless to give it during the progress of an attack.

PRE-ICTERIC ITCHING.

Dr. Riesman reports several cases in which itching has occurred before the appearance of jaundice. Pre-icteric itching is of prognostic significance, and although not enough cases have been reported to prove it yet, so far, they have been malignant rather than benign.

The Combination of Pregnancy with Disease.*

By GIBBON FITZGIBBON, M.D.

A pregnant woman may at any time during her pregnancy contract one of the acute infectious diseases, or a woman who is suffering from a general disease may become pregnant. The result of the combination of pregnancy with a disease is to alter the course of the disease, and often to terminate the pregnancy prematurely.

The prognosis in the case of a pregnant woman suffering from an acute disease is not as good as it would be in the non-pregnant state. This is due to the fact, that the disease has a strong tendency to bring on labour, and the exertion necessary to complete labour leaves the woman in a partially exhausted condition, and so with less vital energy to resist the effects of the disease; also, even after the labour is completed, the period of the puerperium begins, and during this the natural resistance of the tissues of the body against the invasion and the action of disease is very much lower than in the ordinary state.

Even when labour does not come on, and independent of the puerperium, pregnancy may have an unfavourable effect. This is particularly noticed in diseases of the chest and heart. The pressure upwards of the enlarged uterus against the diaphragm interferes with its action and so diminishes the power of expansion of the chest cavity, this is particularly unfavourable in diseases affecting the lungs. Also in the case of heart disease, where the heart is weakened pregnancy may be serious, as during this time the heart is called upon to do more work, and owing to the disease, it may not be able to respond to the call, and as a consequence severe cardiac failure may occur.

The prognosis as regards the pregnancy is also worse. There is always a tendency to the production of premature labour, and consequently the birth of an ill-developed child, which may not have reached that degree of development which will enable it to live at all, or if it lives after its birth it may be almost impossible to rear into a healthy individual. Even those diseases which do not greatly tend to produce premature labour are unfavourable as many of them have a strong tendency to produce death of the fœtus. The

* Read at a meeting of the Irish Nurses' Association, December 11th, 1907.

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