

Medical Matters.

The *Lancet* has an excellent synopsis of the *Annus Medicus* 1908, published in accordance with its usual custom of presenting in the last number of the year a brief account of the salient medical events of the past 12 months.

ENTERIC FEVER.

At a discussion held on the subject of "typhoid carriers" at the Epidemiological Section of the Royal Society of Medicine on March 27th Dr. D. S. Davies and Dr. I. Walker Hall gave some interesting details of two outbreaks of enteric fever traced to the same "carrier," these being the first outbreaks of the kind investigated in this country, although others have since been recorded. During the epidemic in Kelvinside, Glasgow, the outbreak was traced to a woman employed on a farm from which some of the milk supplied to that part of Glasgow was derived. This woman, who had suffered from enteric fever 16 years previously, was proved to be a "carrier" and was probably the source from which the epidemic was derived. Peroxide of magnesium having proved successful in the treatment of fermentative diarrhoea, Dr. W. Kirkpatrick has employed it in enteric fever. He used it in 51 cases; 44 patients recovered and seven died. The cases were nearly all serious ones and the results may be said to have been encouraging, although, as Dr. Kirkpatrick admits, the number of cases was too small to warrant any certain conclusions. The drug was administered in 10 grain doses inclosed in keratin capsules. Such capsules, however, are rather bulky, and it would be better to give two capsules each containing five grains of the remedy. Dr. Daniel D. Jackson (New York) has directed his attention to the possible diffusion of disease by means of the common house-fly. He instituted a series of observations upon the number and activity of flies at different periods of the year, observations conducted by means of traps for catching them alive in all parts of Manhattan and other infected districts. He maintains that he has established a close and apparently constant connection between these insects and the number and severity of the cases of enteric fever and of other serious intestinal diseases. He has also demonstrated the greater prevalence of these diseases along the shore fringe of the island than in the interior, and he has shown the shore fringe to be polluted by human excrement along practically its whole extent. On this excrement the flies deposit their ova, in it their larvæ live and feed, and from it they proceed directly to

the shop of the provision dealer or the milk-jug of the family.

SCOPOLAMINE-MORPHINE NARCOSIS IN CHILDBIRTH.

Under Obstetrics and Gynæcology, the note on Scopolamine-Morphine Narcosis in Childbirth is of interest.

At the present day, since modern women appear to suffer more from nervous exhaustion and inability to bear even the normal pains of childbirth, the provision of some certain and safe means of diminishing these pains is a very important and pressing question to accoucheurs. It is true that by the use of chloroform narcosis a passing insensibility can be maintained for many hours, but this method is far from being free from danger, and the likelihood of its having an injurious effect upon the contractility of the uterine musculature is very considerable. The use of spinal anæsthesia is also contra-indicated, since it produces paralysis of the abdominal muscles—a very serious drawback during parturition.

Professor von Krönig brought before the Section of Obstetrics and Gynæcology at the meeting of the British Medical Association this year the results of the use of the scopolamine-morphine method of narcosis in some 1,700 cases of labour, an experience sufficiently large, as he modestly claimed, to justify his publishing his results. The object of this method of producing partial anæsthesia is to cause the patient to pass into a condition termed "Dämmer-schlaf," or "twilight sleep," of such a character that she is lulled into a sleep in which the labour pains, although apparently perceived, are at once forgotten. The pain is in truth momentarily perceived, but in practice the fact remains, as Professor Krönig points out, that after a successful "twilight sleep" the women awake quite happy and declare that they have felt nothing. The first injection consists of scopolamine and morphine, the subsequent ones, as a rule, of scopolamine alone. The dosage is determined by the test of the patient's consciousness. It is sufficient if the interruption of her mental associations is so complete that sensation disappears with rapidity from the memory. The duration of the labour in these cases is immaterially increased according to Professor Krönig, the risk to the mother is practically *nil* when the dosage is correctly determined, and there is no evidence of any increased risk to the children. It has been pointed out in the *Lancet*, however, that the safety of mother and child is, if we may believe the opponents of the method, not so assured as Professor Krönig is inclined to believe.

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