Clinical Notes on Some Common Ailments.

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NEPHRITIS.

We come now to the treatment of the various affections of the kidney which we have discussed, and it is firstly essential to remember that we can hardly affect the kidneys directly at all; we cannot get at them with local applications, except to a very slight extent, and they are hardly as yet amenable to surgical treatment except for gross lesions such as a stone or an abscess in their interior.

But in reality there are few ailments in which treatment makes so much difference to the comfort of the patient, and the means which are at our command whereby we can regulate the amount of work which the damaged kidneys have to do are very numerous. The essential point is that we should realise what we are doing and why we do it, when we employ any of them.

We can treat disease of the kidneys in one or more of several ways. Thus it is possible to

(*a*) Divert part of the work of the kidneys to other organs.

(*b*) Diminish the amount of waste matter in the blood, so that there is less work for the excretory organs to do as a whole.

(*c*) Stimulate the kidneys to renewed activity.

(*d*) Diminish the harmful effect which the retained urea and its allies are having on the system.

We will now discuss each of these methods in detail, and we shall then be in a position to see how they fit in in the treatment of the various forms of disease of the kidneys. It is often desirable to relieve the kidneys of as much of their normal duties as possible, or, in other words, to throw part of the work of the excretion of water and nitrogenous waste on to other organs, and in practice we can do this fairly successfully. We endeavour, then, to make both the skin and the bowels perform more than their normal share of this work.

To this end we use, for the skin, applications which increase the secretion of sweat, or we can do the same thing by the use of drugs internally. We can employ either hot baths, hot packs, or radient heat or vapour baths; of these, hot baths are the easiest to administer, but their effect is not very great except in young children, and they soon lose their power over the skin when they have been repeated a few times. The temperature must be varied to suit the constitution of the patient, but from 100 deg. to 108 deg. is a useful limit, and the time of immersion should be similarly suited to the individual, but may vary from ten to twenty minutes; after the bath the patient should be wrapped in hot blankets and put to bed; a warm drink often increases the effect of the bath, and is much appreciated by the patient.

Hot packs act more violently, but are sometimes not well borne by feeble patients; the water out of which the blanket is wrung should be at a temperature of 120 deg., and the pack should be applied for from ten to twenty minutes, or, generally speaking, until beads of perspiration are well marked on the forehead of the patient. If a patient feels faint while in the pack, it usually suffices to lower the position of his head and to give a warm drink, or sometimes a little cold water; dashing cold water on the head is also useful, but it is best not to take him out of the pack until perspiration is well established, as the feeling of faintness appears as a rule just when perspiration is beginning, and ceases when the flow is in progress.

Vapour and radient heat baths are more convenient, though not more effectual methods for promoting free perspiration; their use can best be learnt by studying the apparatus itself.

Apart from these mechanical methods, perspiration can be induced by the administration of certain drugs called diaphoretics, which act by relaxing the blood vessels in the skin and stimulating the nerves going to the sweat glands. Of these by far the most powerful is pilocarpine, which is given by hypodermic injection, but it has the grave disadvantage that it sometimes produces dangerous collapse, especially in children; other drugs, such as acetate of ammonia, spirit of nitrous ether, and the like, are quite safe, but have a much slighter effect; they can usefully be combined with hot packs or baths.

It is also advisable to keep the bowels well open, preferably by saline purgatives, or those like jalap, which cause watery evacuations.

Then we can diminish the amount of nitrogenous waste in the circulation, and the easiest way of doing this is obviously to give less nitrogenous food, and, what we must allow, in such a form as to be easily eliminated. The best food for this purpose undoubtedly is milk, and we give this for as long as it can be borne, but it sometimes requires supplementing, and we then add bread, and next vegetable proteids, such as rice, sago, etc., in the form of puddings, and ultimately proteids derived from seeds, such as peas, etc. By far the most harmful food is meat in any form, and espe-

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