

Medical Matters.

ADVANTAGES OF EARLY TREATMENT OF MENTAL DISEASE.

The ninety-fourth annual report of the Royal Asylum, Glasgow, as summarised by the *British Medical Journal*, contains some points of general interest. The physician-superintendent draws attention to the increasing number that seek admission as voluntary patients. Out of a total of 145 admissions 48 were voluntary. During the past three years 105 persons sought treatment for mental disease of their own free will. Dr. Oswald has investigated the results of treatment in this series of cases, and comes to the conclusion (1) that the recovery rate of voluntary patients is greater than that of certified patients, (2) that the duration of treatment is shorter, and (3) that it is only in a few instances necessary to resort to certification. Among the voluntary patients the recovery rate was 50 per cent., or almost 10 per cent. higher than among the certified. Of those that recovered about one-half were under treatment for less than three months, which is a considerably higher ratio than among the certified patients. Further, the voluntary patient seems to come under treatment at an earlier stage than the certified. Thus in 62 of the voluntary cases the duration of illness was less than three months, and in only 31 was it longer than six, which contrasts favourably with the certified patients. Only 11 of the voluntary patients required to be certified, and of these eight had been ill for more than six months, and the other three had already had previous attacks of mental illness. These results were therefore strongly in favour of early admission as voluntary patients. The public are slowly realising that abnormal mental conditions mean disease, often due to a removable cause, and that the best hope for the sufferer lies in an early resort to such special treatment as can only be got in institutions equipped and adapted for the treatment of such disorders.

During the past year an interesting innovation was made by introducing on a small scale the tent treatment of the insane, which is largely used in America. Though the weather was very unsuitable, the results were sufficiently encouraging to warrant a repetition of the experiment. The patients were accommodated in a large tent containing eight or ten beds. They remained the whole day in the open air either in bed or reclining in long wicker chairs. The calmative effect of the open-air rest cure was very marked, and it was often most marked in those who were extremely restless when confined indoors.

Immature Infants.

By T. N. KELYNACK, M.D., M.R.C.P.

Physician to the Infants' Hospital; Medical Adviser to the National Children's Home and Orphanage.

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE INFANTS' HOSPITAL, WESTMINSTER, S.W.

(Concluded from page 387.)

IMMATUREITY AND THE NEO-NATAL PERIOD OF LIFE'S DEVELOPMENT.

The compensatory powers of Nature are great and far-reaching. I would not underestimate the importance of that ill-understood force we call heredity for its power and persistency is manifested in feature and function, in mental processes and bodily characteristics. Neither would I say one word which would seem to justify or even to excuse the neglect of the pregnant woman. But I would insist on the paramount importance of considering and providing for the maintenance of a high standard of maternal function during the unstable period of neo-natal days.

[Dr. Kelynack here discussed the action of certain influences such as alcoholism, laborious and long occupations, etc., on the functions of motherhood and their relation to the immaturity of offspring.]

Many influences may be at work upsetting the new little life.

Alcoholism.—Professor von Bunge states that mothers who are of an alcoholic inheritance although healthy themselves often lack the power to feed their infants. This looks as if Nature was recognising them as unfit for the high office of motherhood. Again, the action of alcohol may influence the child during the neo-natal period. The alcoholised infant is often an unstable and neurotic being. Alcohol sometimes seems to quiet this irritable child better than anything, and ignorant mothers having discovered this permit the toxic influence to be continued.

The effect of alcohol on lactation is also that of a toxic agent, which, through the mother's milk, may be transmitted to the child.

Occupation.—Another example of a factor which may be an important influence in causing immaturity in the offspring is the occupation of the mother. This is brought out by Dr. Newman, late Medical Officer of Health for Finsbury, in his book on "Infantile Mortality." Dr. Newman shows clearly that immaturity is influenced by extrinsic and controllable influences. These

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