

Medical Matters.

RADIUM AND CANCER.

Dr. Louis Wickham, chief of the Radium Institute of Paris, last week delivered an address on the treatment of cancer and other diseases by means of radium, at the Hall of the Royal Society of Medicine, 20, Hanover Square, W. Dr. Wickham said, as a rule, there arose in the inquirer's mind, about radium as a means of curing disease, the idea of a burning and an inflammable reaction or of the destruction of tissues. It was found that these reactions were followed by the repair of tissue; hence radium was a very precious therapeutic agent. He was of opinion that from this standpoint radium had a higher mission and a far greater sphere of usefulness.

THE BRITISH LEAGUE AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS.

As the outcome of the recent National Tuberculosis Conference at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, a British League against Tuberculosis has been formed. The main objects of the League, which will shortly inaugurate branches in the principal industrial and rural districts of the United Kingdom are, briefly, to instruct the public generally in the war against tuberculosis, on the main lines of scientific prevention and treatment, by means of lectures and demonstrations, and to arouse public opinion on the dangers of the communicability of tuberculosis from animals to man through diseased meat and milk. Special efforts will be devoted to active propaganda through educational and local governing bodies, and it is anticipated that this will create an insistent popular demand for further legislative powers or administrative action where necessary. The hon. secretary is Mrs. E. Robinson, British League Against Tuberculosis, 19, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C.

LACTIC ACID BACILLI IN THE TREATMENT OF MELANCHOLIA.

Dr. Hubert J. Norman, D.P.H., Edin., Assistant Medical Officer, Camberwell House Asylum, writes in the *British Medical Journal* as follows on the value of soured milk in the treatment of melancholia:—

“Ford Robertson, whose recent brilliant researches in association with McCrae in regard to the etiology of general paralysis of the insane have created so much discussion, assigns to toxæmic states a large value in the causation of melancholia. (As a curious recapitulation of the dogmas concerning “black bile” of olden times may be noted the modern ideas of toxins.) Maudsley, Clouston, and many others have noted the invariable concomitance be-

tween disordered conditions of the alimentary canal and melancholic states. The latter, it is true, are frequently looked upon as causes, the former as effects. But, for the sake of argument; let us assume a contrary hypothesis.

“Last summer it was stated in the *British Medical Journal* that the lactic acid bacilli or their product soured milk, or tablets containing the bacilli, had been tried in such conditions as chronic diarrhoea, catarrhal diarrhoea, constipation, etc., and their method of operation was not empirical, but was based on the hostile influence of the lactic acid bacilli on the other organismal denizens of the intestine. The results were gratifying. It occurred to me that, this inimical action having been proved, the lactic bacilli or their products might well have a beneficial effect in melancholia, the reasoning leading to this conclusion being as stated above. In discussing the matter with Dr. David Hunter, of the West Ham Borough Asylum, I found that the same idea had occurred to him.

“Having tried the treatment by tablets containing the bacilli and by prepared milk, I have observed such improvement in the cases as to warrant a short note on the subject. In one case in particular the result has been marked—an example of hypochondriacal melancholia, exhibiting such typical symptoms as would have marked him inevitably for inclusion in his categories by Burton: “His soul abhorred all meat. Like Job, he cursed his stars. He was weary of the sun, and yet afraid to die; *vivere nolunt et mori nesciunt*.” He had the jaundiced eye, the sallow complexion, a more than ordinary constipation. At first the bowels were moved with difficulty, and only when strong purgatives were used. He was given soured milk and bacillary tablets; and the result must be described as satisfactory. Now the bowels move easily (though he will not, by the way, admit that this is so), the complexion has cleared in a marked degree, and in the space of three months he has increased his weight by 11 lb. I do not imagine that ordinary aperient treatment would have wrought this change. Mentally he has become brighter, has taken more interest in his surroundings, has read the papers and books provided, and has conversed freely with his neighbours. In other cases I have noticed beneficial results, but not in such marked degree, though, on the other hand, they were not such profoundly melancholic cases as the one I have mentioned. The cases have been too few in number and the treatment has been carried out for too short a time to warrant me in making any generalisation, and my sole object is to suggest that this method of treatment may be given a trial.

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