

## Medical Matters.

### THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION. KERNELS OF THE CONGRESS.

Last week we briefly referred to the Addresses in Medicine and Surgery delivered at the meeting of the British Medical Association, held at the Imperial Institute. It is obviously impossible to give a full report of the twenty-one sections, but the following points are of interest to nurses.

#### THE EFFECT OF FOODSTUFFS ON TEETH.

Professor Sim Wallace spoke on the effect of different kinds of foodstuff on the teeth. The disease known as dental caries, he said, arose from the undue lodgment of fermentable carbohydrates in more or less immediate contact with the teeth. The soft foodstuffs which little children were so generally compelled to consume did not clean the mouth, but left it sticky with fermentable carbo-hydrates. There were two classes of foods—those which tended to leave these carbo-hydrates in the mouth and those which brushed them away. The foods which operated in the latter direction were those of a fibrous nature which required mastication. But when they turned to the foods which children were compelled to live upon very largely, such as milk, porridge and milk, sloppy milk puddings, bread soaked in milk, potatoes and gravy, bread and jam, they realised the impossibility of efficient mastication being carried out.

#### CHANGES IN THE NERVOUS SYSTEM AS THE RESULT OF CHRONIC ALCOHOLISM.

Dr. Mott, who read a paper on "The Histological Changes Occurring in the Nervous System in Certain Cases of Chronic Alcoholism," stated that the poisonous effects of alcohol are dependent upon the dose, but still more on the susceptibility of the individual. He further discussed the transient effects upon the stable, healthy, nervous system of occasional alcoholic abuse, and the permanent effects of its continued abuse. Under proper treatment, and when alcohol was withdrawn, the tendency was for the symptoms to disappear and for the patients to recover.

#### RADIUM IN THE TREATMENT OF CANCER.

Dr. Louis Wickham, of Paris, in the course of an address, illustrated with lantern slides, stated that the chief interest of radium was in its power of selection. It acted as a caustic of special subtlety, seeking out the elements which it wished to destroy. All tissues were not suitable ground for the selective action of radium, but some, such as cancer, offered a specially favourable field. Results depended upon great experience and a large quantity of radium, and in the great majority of cases surgery should be associated with its use.

### TROPICAL MEDICINE.

In the Section on Tropical Medicine, Lieut.-Col. Sir R. Havelock Charles, K.C.V.O., M.D., dealt with "Special Factors Influencing the Suitability of Europeans for Life in the Tropics." The special characteristics of the tropics were, he said, long continued high temperature, with great diurnal variations, and parasitic disease. Once a person had had a severe illness in the tropics, a prolonged change to Europe was essential. The best kind of man to go to the tropics was the average Britisher, with a clear head, even temper, abstemious, and not over-intellectual, and the best asset a working man in the tropics could have was a true woman. Persons addicted to drugs or drink should not go out; the obese were heavily handicapped, and asthma and tuberculosis should be an absolute bar.

#### MEDICAL TREATMENT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

Dr. James Kerr, Medical Officer (Education Department) London County Council, claimed that medical treatment of school children was the inevitable result of general medical inspection, though the medical inspector should never treat the cases. Ninety to ninety-five per cent. of all school cases could be included in the following groups:—(1) Dental, (2) visual, (3) aural (including throat), (4) debilitated, anæmic, and strumous children (in which class medical treatment was of secondary importance to hygienic environment), (5) ringworm. For the great majority of these cases neither hospitals nor private doctors offered material help; in the case of private practitioners possibly because the children did not go to them; at the hospitals they were simply cases to be got rid of. The school clinic appeared to be the only complete and scientific solution; it gave every doctor his chance, and reasonable reward, saved the parents' time and much annoyance, relieved the hospitals, and gave relief for every child requiring it. The way must be made easy. The London County Council was acquiring experience from its arrangements with hospitals and existing institutions. It charged the parents about four shillings a case, remitting a certain amount in destitute cases.

#### DEFECTIVE EYESIGHT IN CHILDREN.

In the Section of Ophthalmology, Mr. N. Bishop Harman moved the following resolution:—"That in view of the importance of obtaining continuity of treatment of defects in vision of school children throughout the period of education, and of proper co-ordination of medical inspection and treatment, it is the opinion of the Ophthalmological Section of the Association that the organisation of school clinics is desirable."

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