

MEDICAL MATTERS.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF SYPHILIS.

The very important editorial review on recent Developments in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Syphilis, and the opinion expressed as to the value and use of Salvarsan, which appeared in the *British Medical Journal* of September 23rd, should be read by all those interested in this question, a question in the very front rank where the national health is concerned. Unfortunately, many nurses in social branches of service cannot afford to subscribe for the *British Medical Journal*, so we quote the article at length for their instruction and benefit.

THE DIAGNOSIS OF SYPHILIS.

"With the discovery by Schaudinn in March, 1905, of the origin of syphilis in a protozoon, the study of the prophylaxis and treatment of the disease entered upon a new, and it is to be hoped, a final epoch. It has now become possible by the detection of the spirochæte to obtain proof of the syphilitic nature of any venereal infection. In former years there can be little doubt that many persons were subjected to the inconvenience and distress of prolonged antisymphilitic treatment when in reality they were free from the disease.

"Others, who at first permitted the active treatment of a suspicious infection, allowed their fears to be lulled to rest, and discontinued treatment only to find, with the lapse of years, the proof which had been wanting in the beginning. In still other cases it had been the practice to sacrifice valuable time and to await the appearance of the secondary rash to confirm the diagnosis. By Schaudinn's discovery much of this uncertainty has been removed.

"In the following year, 1906, Wassermann perfected and published his method of serum diagnosis. By means of the so-called Wassermann test, the diagnosis of syphilis in the secondary and tertiary stages, as well as of such parasymphilitic affections as general paralysis of the insane and locomotor ataxia, has been placed upon a much more certain basis. Further than this, it is the special merit of the test to have provided us with a criterion of the merits of the different methods of treatment. The long dispute as to the relative merits of mercurial inunctions, of intramuscular injection of mercury, and of mercury given by the mouth, seemed likely at length to achieve a settlement by an appeal to the judgment of the Wasser-

mann reaction. The reaction remains positive for a considerable time after the symptoms have disappeared or become latent. The most successful treatment is that which most rapidly converts a positive Wassermann reaction into a negative reaction, and keeps it so permanently.

SALVARSAN, OR "606."

"From such attempts to solve problems long disputed, the attention of workers was suddenly diverted by the startling announcement that Ehrlich, after preparing and investigating nearly 200 complicated derivatives of phenyl-arsenious acid, had introduced the preparation '606,' a single injection of which would not only bring about the disappearance of syphilitic lesions, but would convert a positive into a negative reaction. During the last twelve months, the work of investigating the claims of this new remedy has proceeded on all sides, and the time may now be considered ripe for discussion of the results obtained. It was for this reason that the Section of Therapeutics at the recent meeting of the British Medical Association at Birmingham arranged for a discussion upon recent developments in the recognition and treatment of the disease.

"There can be little doubt that the new remedy, Salvarsan or '606,' in the experience of nearly all workers, has justified the chief of the claims which its introducer has made for it. With all new remedies there is, of course, a tendency to exaggeration, and this is especially so when the remedy is devised to meet a disease of the nature of syphilis. Both abroad and in this country much has been written in the public Press by those who are little qualified by experience or training to pronounce upon the subject. In Germany an attack has even been made upon the distinguished introducer of the drug, who was accused of encouraging immorality by depriving the disease of its danger. Such a contention is unjustifiable and untrue. It is ridiculous to speak of '606' as rendering syphilis innocuous. The most that Ehrlich can claim—and it is surely a cause for congratulation—is to have made less terrible the punishment which may follow upon a single offence—a punishment which falls upon the guilty and innocent alike.

TREATMENT BY SALVARSAN.

"The Papers which were read at Birmingham, and especially the important statistics contributed by Major T. W. Gibbard, R.A.M.C., and Major O. W. Harrison, R.A.M.C., relating to their work at the Military Hospital, Rochester Row, can leave little doubt of the extreme value of the drug. The rapidity with which

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