

MEDICAL MATTERS.

GEHEMIRAT VON WASSERMANN ON TUMOUR RESEARCH.

At a recent meeting (December 20, 1911) of the Berlin Medical Society, an announcement which caused a profound sensation was made by Professor von Wassermann, the renowned discoverer of the blood diagnosis of syphilis, respecting his latest discoveries in regard to healing of tumours. As Professor von Wassermann tells us, the problem of how to influence certain forms of tumour by chemical means has engaged scientific investigation for some time. Experiments have now been made at the Institute for Infectious Diseases with the object of finding a chemical agent which, on entering the circulation of the blood, attacks the recently-formed tumour cells without injuring the cells belonging to a normal condition of body. For the object of investigation certain tumours, often observed in mice, which Gehemirat Ehrlich classes with cancer and the equally malignant sarcoma, were chosen. After much thought, testing, and investigation, it has been finally ascertained that Tellur and Selen, two chemical bodies, when combined with a fluorescein pigment, will actually enter the tumour cells and destroy them, while leaving the other cells intact. A chemical compound of Selen and Eosin, which is very difficult to reduce, proved to be peculiarly effective. Already, after the third injection of this agent into the circulation of the blood, the tumour in the animals experimented on began to soften, after the fourth injection absorption took place, and after further injections the curative process had so far advanced that in ten days nothing more was to be perceived of the tumour. The animals were cured, and up to the present moment have remained so. In cases of largely developed tumours the operation of the chemical agent was so violent as to prove fatal, doubtless the result of the absorption of the rapidly fluidised tumour-substance. The investigator did not confine himself to animals with artificially produced tumours, but also tried the experiment on such as were already suffering from the same tumour. In such cases the cure was also effective.

In order not to excite false hopes, Professor von Wassermann, in concluding his address on his able and important developments, laid stress on the fact that hitherto the remedy discovered by him has only been applied to and proved successful with animals, and that as yet there is no certainty as to its curative power with

human beings, who suffer from tumours. However, the hope of benefit to mankind in regard to cancer is justified by the well-established facts which he and his assistants, Dr. Keysser and Dr. Michael Wassermann, proved by numerous experiments. These are based on the results of microscopic investigation by Gehemirat von Hausemann, who explained that the tumour cells, on being turned by the chemical appliance into a kind of fluid pulp, are conveyed to the spleen and liver and there consumed.

SPECIFIC INFECTIONS FROM THE NURSE'S POINT OF VIEW.

Dr. F. Butcher has a simple and useful little article in the *Nurses' Journal of India* on "Specific Infections from the Nurse's Point of View," in which she says accidental infection of venereal disease is by no means uncommon, and all nurses should be forewarned in cases likely to need precaution in nursing.

The mucous membranes of the eyes and vulva are the situations most likely to be inoculated. Imperfectly washed towels, hand-basins, baths, dirty closets and latrines are all sources of danger; possibly even bank notes or door handles if touched by a person suffering from the conjunctival form of the disease. Any person who travels much in India should carry a handy disinfectant, such as lysol, for use in case of need, the habits of the natives being specially conducive to the spread of infection of this kind.

The maternity nurse is advised to take special precautions in the event of a suspicious case before parturition. . . . Kissing a syphilitic infant has been known to communicate the disease, and no healthy woman should be allowed to suckle a syphilitic infant, the mother only being safe from infection, being previously protected by a species of auto-inoculation, except in such cases where the mother herself is the source of the disease. Here again the maternity nurse runs the most risk, and accidental infection is usually from abrasions on the fingers, which have not been promptly disinfected with a mercurial lotion. A healthy infant may contract syphilis from a wet nurse, and before selecting the latter both mother and child should be subjected to medical examination, as the former, if under treatment, may exhibit no signs of disease. Syphilitic children are usually apparently healthy at birth, but in the course of about three weeks nasal catarrh, known as "snuffles," makes its appearance; thrush and the specific rashes may also be pre-

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