

Practical Points.

Phthisis and House Infection.

Mr. J. R. Johnson, M.R.C.S. (*British Medical Journal*), has based a paper on a series of cases of tuberculosis occurring in Richmond. In not a single instance did a case of tuberculosis arise *de novo* in a modern, decently-kept house. It is impossible to ignore the danger lurking in house dust; and particularly the dust of ill-ventilated, dark, and basemented houses. The inhalation of septic house dirt by patients already phthisical, although the disease may be more or less dormant, is of the gravest consequences. The question of soil has little to do with the prevalence of phthisis. Such facts as are here stated throw light on the value of notification of tuberculosis, especially if such notification is followed by proper disinfection of the rooms or house.

Eyesight of School Children.

For some time the London School Board has had under consideration the question of the eyesight of the children and the means to be taken for its preservation when defective. As a result, the Board has appointed six oculists. The general result of a preliminary test showed that while 80 per cent. of the children in the schools were found to have normal vision and 10 per cent. fair vision, the sight of 10 per cent. was bad, and of these 2 or 3 per cent. were very bad. Such defects of vision as existed were not due chiefly to fine work or bad lighting in the school, but to social and nutritive conditions and to racial peculiarities, the proportion of those who had very bad sight being larger in the poorer schools than in those which were well-to-do, and larger in those schools which were predominantly Jewish than in those which were mainly Christian. The recommendation of the medical officer was that in future every child, when first admitted into a senior department, should be examined by the class teacher and a vision record made, such test being repeated annually.

Fly as a Carrier of Typhoid Infection.

Dr. Alice Hamilton read a paper on this subject before a meeting of the Chicago Medical Society. She made an exhaustive inquiry into the part played by the common house fly in the recent epidemic of typhoid fever in Chicago. Most of her work was done in the laboratory of the Memorial Institute for Infectious Diseases. She summarises her conclusions as follows:—1. The epidemic of typhoid fever in Chicago during July, August, September, and October, 1902, was most severe in the Nineteenth Ward, which, with one-thirty-sixth of the city's population, had over one-seventh of all the deaths from this disease. 2. The concentration of the epidemic in this locality cannot be explained by contamination of the drinking water, or of food, or on the ground of ignorance and poverty of the inhabitants, for the Nineteenth Ward does not differ in these respects from several other parts of the city. 3. An investigation of the sanitary conditions of this region shows that many of the street sewers are too small, and that only 48 per cent. of the houses have sanitary plumbing. Of the remaining 52 per cent., 7 per cent. have defective

plumbing, 22 per cent. water-closets with intermittent water supply, 11 per cent. have privies connected with the sewer, but without water supply, and 12 per cent. have privies with no sewer connection. 4. The streets in which the sanitary arrangements are worst had the largest number of cases of typhoid fever during this epidemic, irrespective of the poverty of the inhabitants. 5. Flies caught in two undrained privies on the fences of the two yards, on the walls of the two houses, and in the room of a typhoid patient, were used to inoculate eighteen tubes, and from five of these tubes the typhoid bacillus was isolated. 6. When the discharges from typhoid patients are left exposed in privies or yards, flies may be an important agent in the dissemination of the typhoid infection.

The Aseptic Care of Infants.

A French paper from Lyons states that during the last few months the diapers and garments used for the infants in the hospital have been sterilised in the same way as the dressings, &c., for surgery. The outfit for each babe is wrapped in a separate cloth, arranged in order, and then sterilised and handled as little as possible. The attendants disinfect their hands as for assisting at an operation before taking up the babe. They find that the extra trouble is more than compensated by the prevention of cutaneous affections and the rapid healing of those observed when the infant is first received. This method of aseptic care of infants has been found to pay in the saving of both time and trouble in the end, beside the advantages for the child.

Lecithin in Tuberculosis.

Dr. T. Boyle, in *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, recommends the use of the yolk of the egg, combined with equal parts of a normal salt solution, administered hypodermically. One ounce may be introduced beneath the skin without producing local irritation. He claims that the lecithin, normally present in the yolk of the egg, does not undergo the molecular change which takes place when it passes through the digestive tract. The mode of introduction hypodermically is recommended only when the digestive processes are not normal. The lecithin of the yolk is more stable than that put on the market.

Sauve qui peut.

Owing to the failure of the fishery on the coast of Norway, the price of the best cod-liver oil has risen to an alarming extent—eight gallons of it now fetching a price of more than 25s., whereas a year ago it was worth about 5s., or even less. The *Practitioner* for June remarks that it is impossible not to feel some concern at the condition of things now prevailing with regard to so important an article of the *Materia Medica*. Several of the London hospitals, it is stated, now decline to supply their patients with this medicine at all, and it is rumoured that inferior substitutes, such as shark-oil, are being employed in place of that derived from the cod. Considering the admitted value of the true oil in the treatment of phthisis and other forms of tuberculosis, and in many of the diseases of children, the present scarcity may be looked upon as a veritable medical calamity. It is to be hoped that the fish next season will return to their accustomed haunts.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)