

Medical Matters.

THE INTERNATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS CONGRESS.



The Congress on Tuberculosis held in London in July, 1901, was marked by two special features, the sensation caused by Professor Koch when he expressed his disbelief in the possibility of the transmission of bovine tuberculosis to human beings, and the invitation which was issued by the Congress to the Governments of the world to take remedial measures against tuberculosis. That invitation has been responded to in a remarkable degree; in Great Britain we have now a National Association for the Prevention of Consumption, in Germany an international information office has been established at Berlin with the object of preventing the spread of consumption, while France has an International Tuberculosis Society, under whose auspices the Paris Congress has been convened, has been inaugurated. Considerable progress has also been made in the enforcement of preventive measures, amongst which must be classed the establishment of sanatoria for the treatment of consumptive cases, and the campaign against spitting in public places. It is anticipated that one of the objects of the present Conference will be to consider the efficacy of the sanatorium method of treatment. That it is useful in removing from crowded surroundings, and in isolating, patients suffering from an infectious disease is undoubted, but whether it effects as much in the direction of permanent cure in the case of the patients so isolated is open to question.

In Germany, where the matter has been gone into with great thoroughness, the German Imperial Departments of Health have issued some startling statistics proving that out of 100 cases dismissed from sanatoria as able to work, only 21 per cent. were able to do so four years later. On the other hand, out of 100 cases dismissed as unable to work and apparently incurable, 18 per cent. were able to do so four years later. The figures merit careful study and consideration before expensive schemes for building sanatoria are carried into effect, because, if the chief benefit of these institutions is to act as isolating centres rather than as remedial agents

in the cure of disease, it is probable that the same end might be attained by less expensive methods.

Again, there is by no means a consensus of medical opinion as to the desirability of collecting under the same roof a number of cases of tuberculosis, those who are opposed to this method being of opinion that it is liable to intensify undesirable conditions, and to favour re-infection of convalescents by fresh arrivals. They believe, therefore, that the isolation of single cases affords the best results. Clearly the question should be settled before costly sanatoria are built. The most potent force available against tuberculosis in our present stage of knowledge is probably the enforcement of hygienic conditions and the provision of proper accommodation for the working classes. Tuberculosis is, undoubtedly, a "filth disease," and so long as certain sections of the poor are housed under conditions which the wealthier classes would not, for a moment, permit in relation to their horses and cattle, so long will tuberculosis take its revenge by destroying annually in Europe alone over a million persons, the sufferers from this preventable disease being drawn not only from the overcrowded and unfed classes with which it originates, but from the wealthier classes who become infected, thus proving that we cannot neglect obvious duties without ourselves being the sufferers thereby.

Not the least interesting of the features of the Paris Congress is the exhibition occupying the ground floor. In addition to the pathological and anatomical collections are models or photographs of most of the European sanatoria, whilst of great interest are the specimens of both gratuitous and paying sanatoria, of a servant's bedroom in the Champs Elysées, and of a cell in the Fresnes Prison.

An instructive point brought out by statistics is the terrible mortality from tuberculosis amongst the laundrymen of Paris. In the course of their work they continually handle infected clothing, and the rate at which they fall victims to the disease is an enormous one. It would appear from this that all linen should be disinfected before being handled by employees of laundries, whether men or women.

Mons. Loubet, President of the French Republic, opened the Congress on Monday last, when all the members of the Diplomatic

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