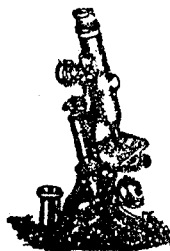


## Medical Matters.

### RAND MINERS' PHTHISIS.



A valuable summary of the present state of knowledge with regard to Rand Miners' Phthisis is comprised in an address which Dr. T. W. Oliver delivered at Blyth. The most striking peculiarity of the disease is the swiftness with which its course is run and with which death follows on seizure. The disease bears some relation to miners' disease as known in Cornwall, and, in fact, its ravages first became a matter of public discussion in consequence of the number of Cornish miners who returned home—very often to die—during the Boer War; but the progress of the malady may be roughly stated as twice as speedy. It occurs chiefly among rock-drillers, for the evident reason that these men are more exposed to the very fine dust which is given off in the process of rock-drilling; but whereas the average number of years worked by a Cornish miner at the drill was 8·4 the Rand rock-driller was usually incapacitated after working 4·7. The ages of the men who have died of Rand Miners' Phthisis average from thirty-two to thirty-seven years. These figures seem to indicate some unknown factor in the disease which is not sufficiently accounted for by the reasons which are customarily assigned for it, and which include the saturation of the atmosphere of the workings by the gases generated in the blasting explosions; the use of machine drills, which generate more dust than hand-drills; and the long hours which the men will work for the high wages paid them—together with the absence of comfortable quarters and healthy precautions. The disease is not necessarily accompanied by tuberculosis, though it will induce a condition of the lungs that fits them for the reception of the tuberculosis germ; but is specifically a fibrous condition of the lungs brought about apparently by charging them with dusty and gritty matter. Even if this be granted there seems to be reason for further inquiry into the specific causes of this serious disease.

### ALBINISM.

Professor Karl Pearson, F.R.S., of University College, with the assistance of Dr. Stainer and Dr. Nettleship, is at present making investigations into the heredity of albinism in man.

An albino (from the Latin *albus*, white) is a person in whom the skin, hair, and iris are light, and the pigmentum of the eye is absent. The term was originally applied by the Portuguese to persons found on the coast of Africa who resembled the negroes in every respect but colour. The defective pigmentation may be incomplete or complete, partial or universal, congenital or accidental.

In the true albino, whether of the fair or the dark races, the skin is pink and white and more or less transparent. The hair is frequently silvery or of an opaque white, and sometimes the body is covered with a white down. According to the density of its fibrous structure the iris is grey or pink. An effect of the absence of pigment of the eyeball is that correctness of sight is interfered with. The albino is intolerant of light, and the characteristic droop of the eyelids and stoop of the head are due to Nature's endeavour to shelter the eyes. The consequence of this is that the albino sees more comfortably when the light is dim than in full sunlight. Albinos are often persons of physical strength as well as of intellectual vigour.

### A NEW VACCINE.

It is announced by the *Matin* that Dr. Roux and Professor Vallée have discovered a vaccine against bovine tuberculosis composed of tuberculosis bacilli from horses. They started their investigations from the principle laid down by Professor Behring respecting the discovery of bovine vaccine against tuberculosis, but the Professor's vaccine was composed of human bacilli. It is thought that the new vaccine will have the double advantage of being easy to manipulate and not dangerous, for the tuberculosis of horses is not communicable to man. It is believed that the new serum will prove quite as efficacious and give as long immunity as Professor Behring's bovine vaccine, but an official announcement concerning a perfected vaccine has not yet been made.

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