

Medical Matters.

THE PREVENTION OF TUBERCULOSIS.



An interesting lecture on the Prevention of Tuberculosis was recently delivered at Newry in connection with the Tuberculosis Exhibition, by Dr. B. H. Steede, of the Rostrevor Sanatorium.

Dr. Steede said in part:—
Of all Irish problems by far the most important to my mind is this one, viz., how to reduce the mortality from tuberculosis — and there can be no more effective means of making widely understood what can and ought to be done to effect this reduction than this Tuberculosis Exhibition.

ANNUAL MORTALITY FROM TUBERCULOSIS.

The annual mortality from Tuberculosis in Ireland is about 12,000, that is on the average 33 adults, most of them young adults, die each day from the disease, and this has been going on for years with but comparatively feeble efforts to make matters better.

If any railway accident occurred in which 33 individuals were killed every investigation would very properly be made to find out the cause, or who was at fault. Is it no one's fault that, say to-morrow, 33 individuals will die from tubercular disease in Ireland? Is it not a fact that nothing like this number of deaths would now be occurring daily if more preventive measures had been taken in the past?

It is morally necessary to effectively reduce this tuberculosis mortality, and it is the well-known facts as to the common channels of infection, and the more or less obvious corresponding means of prevention, that to my mind most need to be further published and emphasised.

HOW THE DISEASE IS COMMUNICATED.

It is possible for the disease to be communicated in three ways—viz., by inoculation, ingestion, or inhalation. We are only concerned with the two latter—ingestion and inhalation—that is, we may become infected either by swallowing the bacilli or taking them in with our breath. Probably we all have both swallowed and inhaled tubercle bacilli. Fortunately we have not all got consumption. The dose must be large and frequently repeated, or the individual predisposed to the disease. What will do no harm to one man may perhaps infect another who has less special resisting powers. Still, the fact remains that no matter how prone a man may be to the disease

it cannot develop unless the tubercle bacillus is in some way afforded an entrance into his system, and our first duty is to see as far as we can that what we eat and drink and the air we breathe do not contain the essential germ.

CHIEF SOURCE OF DANGER.

The chief source of danger, and the one which should be attacked most energetically, is impure milk. Every tubercular cow does not give tuberculous milk, but, if the udder has the disease the milk is sure to contain large numbers of tubercle bacilli. If we take on chance 300 milch cows from one to five will be found to have tubercular disease of the udder, and to yield milk laden with the germs of tuberculosis. Mr. T. W. Russell estimates that in Ireland 75,000,000 gallons of milk are annually used as food. It follows, therefore, that the number of gallons of milk, laden with tubercle bacilli, and used annually for human food, has been variously estimated to be from a quarter of a million to a million and a quarter.

It is practically certain that of the 12,000 who in this country die every year from tuberculosis many, especially children, owe their deaths to the drinking of tuberculous milk.

Surely matters need not be so bad as this. There is no use in wasting energy in advocating any measures not within the range of what is practically possible, but I believe we should be well within that range in urging that all cows with tubercular disease of the udder should be destroyed, and some compensation given to the owners.

I do not mean that all cows that react to tuberculin should be destroyed. That is not necessary, and would be quite impossible, but the number of cows that have the disease in the udder is not so very great and their elimination is not impossible. To stop the production of tuberculous milk would mean to dry up a large source of the tuberculosis amongst ourselves, and our children. This is a measure, however, that requires State interference.

More important still are the common measures depending more directly on ourselves in the careful management of the expectoration, and with cleanliness and proper care a consumptive should be no source of danger to those around him.

In the case of a well-to-do patient, the necessary precautions are very easily carried out, but if he is helpless and poverty stricken they are sure to be neglected, and his room tends to become a hotbed of infection. It has been proved that the bacillus quickly perishes if

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