# Medical Matters.

## ERYSIPELAS.

Attention has already been called in this column to the good results which have been attained by the injection of the bacilli of erysipelas in cases of malignant disease. A curious contribution to the same literature has recently been made by an American physician concerning a patient who died from pneumonia while suffering from cancer of the liver. It is stated that in all the organs of this patient there was found the form of bacillus known as *streptococcus pyogenes*, and the doctor who performed the *post-mortem* examination slightly wounded one of his fingers and probably had it infected, for in twenty-four hours the wound showed signs of inflammation; and in four days he developed a typical attack of facial erysipelas. The narrator of the case in question considers that the doctor's attack of erysipelas was due to the infection of his finger, and as the patient never showed any sign of erysipelas, that it may be regarded as proved that the *streptococcus pyogenes* is identical with the bacillus of erysipelas. The case certainly is a curious one, but it is not proved that the attack of erysipelas was not merely an accidental coincidence, nor, on the other hand, that the doctor was infected with the *streptococcus* at all. The case is very interesting and important however, because it may lead to further investigations in the same direction. It is by no means unlikely that it may be found, hereafter, that this particular bacillus occurs largely in the bodies of those suffering from cancer. But if so, and if it proves to be identical with the bacillus of erysipelas, it is difficult to understand what benefit can result from injecting into the body of a person suffering from malignant disease, fresh cultures of a germ which is already swarming in his tissues.

## THE INFECTION OF TUBERCLE.

A French observer has discovered that of twenty-nine apparently perfectly healthy individuals who were thrown in contact with patients suffering from consumption, no less than nine showed the presence of the bacillus of tubercle on the mucous membrane of the nose. All these nine people were constantly living in a Hospital for consumptive patients, and in each case the diagnosis of the bacillus was proved by inoculations into guinea-pigs. Apparently these nine people showed no signs of tubercular infection, and it has already been shown by statistics from English and foreign Chest Hospitals that it is comparatively rare for Doctors or Nurses working in such Institutions to be affected by consumption. The explanation probably is that the bacillus is powerless to cause any harm even if it becomes located on the mucous membrane, provided that the general health and the local condition of the person so affected is at the time quite healthy and free from any breach of tissue which the bacillus could infect.

## THE CONTAGIOUSNESS OF LEPROSY.

It appears now to be generally admitted by those who have had the greatest experience amongst cases of leprosy, that the disease is distinctly contagious, and that it will in course of years infect a whole district; its progress being so slow, and the period of infection so prolonged that once it has commenced to spread it is almost impossible to predict the ravages which it may commit; and all observers appear to be united in the advice that as soon as a case of leprosy is discovered, it should be firmly and finally isolated, and access from the healthy to the diseased should be rigorously forbidden. It appears to be, in fact, a disease dependent rather upon actual contact than any other method of infection. The effects of isolation are beyond all dispute, and in Norway, for example, in twenty years, the number of cases suffering from the disease was reduced from more than 2600 to less than 800 by the compulsory segregation of lepers. It would appear that the disease is increasing in the United States, because it has now been proposed, there, that neglect on the part of a medical man or any relation to report the appearance of leprosy in any person, shall be regarded as a penal offence; that immigrants affected with leprosy should be arrested at the ports of entry and sent home again, and that the Government should establish graded Hospitals where both confirmed, and also suspected, cases may be carefully isolated, and treated.

## STERILISING LIGATURES.

A French surgeon, who has made numerous experiments on the sterilisation of ligatures, reports the discovery of a very valuable new method which he has employed to attain this object. The vapour of alcohol raised to 120° C. completely destroys the most deadly and persistent micro-organisms. The spores, for example, of anthrax and tetanus are destroyed by being subjected for 35 to 45 minutes to the action of this vapour. Catgut can be so sterilized without losing any of its valuable properties, and numerous experiments have shown that the vapour of absolute alcohol gives better results in this sterilisation than any other process which is at present used.

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