

Medical Matters.

TUBERCULOSIS.



A VERY valuable paper has recently been published, in a foreign journal, on the consideration of the supposed infectious nature of this disease. The author calls attention to the morbid fear of contagion spreading among the people, and holds that it is largely under the influence of physicians. The consumption scare exerts a demoralizing influence on the victims as well as on those who come in contact with them; it brands the consumptive as an outcast, and mercilessly severs all blood relations or ties of marriage and friendship. The author therefore questions the correctness of the prevalent belief in the contagiousness of tuberculosis, and cites numerous observations of such authorities as Revilliod, Riffel, Mitrophanow, Varguniw, Middendorp, Hueppe, Aufrecht, Williams, and others, tending to disprove not only the contagious nature of tuberculosis, but the direct causative relation to the latter of the bacillus of Koch. He endeavours to prove, by statistics and otherwise, that in hospitals and sanitoriums, where the helper comes in intimate contact with consumptives, cases of infection are extremely rare. Thus, during his service in hospitals for the last twelve years, he observed only one case of infection, the patient, a servant at the autopsy room, being of very untidy habits and an alcoholic. Similarly, cases of direct infection among physicians are extremely rare, as is attested by the fact that many throat specialists who come in such close contact with patients suffering from tubercular laryngitis, live to a good old age. The Commission for the investigation of diseases in England sent out the question, "Is tuberculosis contagious?" to the profession; and of the 1,000 answers, only 261 were affirmative; 673 absolutely denied the contagiousness of consumption. A similar question was proposed by the Hospital Society of Paris to 10,000 physicians, and 83 affirmed, giving 439 observations, 213 of which indicated the contagious nature of this disease. Of 124 physicians who answered this question to the Italian Hygienic Society, 59 were in the affirmative. "We," says the author,

"have inhaled, inhale, and undoubtedly will always inhale, not an unconsiderable number" [of tubercle bacilli]. In a lesser number we take them in with our food, as, for instance, milk from tuberculous cows. It is time to cease trembling before the "rods"; it is time to place them in their very modest position in the causation of disease; it is time to consider as truthful the idea of Vergely that "the soil is all, the microbe nothing." In conclusion, he recommends as an effective prophylactic against consumption, not the free spittoons, but improvement in the hygienic and dietetic conditions of the poor, so as to fortify their organisms against infection.

THE OXYGEN TREATMENT.

FOR some time past, many experiments have been made in treating wounds with oxygen. This is generally carried out by the continuous exposure of the parts affected to the oxygen gas, and it is claimed that the most beneficial results have been thereby obtained. Contrary to the ordinary opinion, that the oxygen treatment is only useful in cases of chronic ulcers and sores, it is stated that the most brilliant results are seen where the treatment is used in cases of recent wounds, burns, etc., both in reference to the rapidity of the healing as well as to the nature of the new skin formed; and that it is not any ordinary cicatrix that is produced, but a skin almost physiologically perfect. The following cases are reported in which the results produced were perfect. A chronic senile gangrenous ulcer, in a patient 83 years old. A contused wound, three weeks old and infected, in a patient 47 years old. Extensive lupus of the face and ear, that had been rapidly spreading for two years, despite treatment by various methods. The method is at any rate easy, simple, and harmless; and in view of the very remarkable results which are claimed for it, this plan of treating wounds will probably be very widely tested.

It is also very noteworthy how much more largely oxygen in various forms is being employed at the present day, in the treatment of internal diseases, than was the case, even three years ago. Inhalations of the gas are, indeed, the recognised treatment for many of the most dangerous forms of lung or heart disease; while the benefits obtained from its external use are merely beginning to be recognised.

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