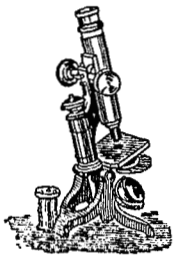
Medical Matters.

THE HYDROPHOBIA MICROBE.



To Professor Sormani, of the University of Pavia, belongs the distinction of discovering the long-sought-after microbe of hydrophobia. It belongs to the tribe of polymorphous microbes, and, therefore, presents itself sometimes in the shape of micrococci, sometimes in the form of bacilli, and more rarely in the form of blastomycete. It is obtained, as a rule, from the nerve tissues and salivary glands of infected animals, but occasionally from other portions also. Professor Sormani has been able to make close observations on the life and habits of many of these microbes bred, by the usual methods, under his supervision. In the majority of cases the cultivation of a little infected material in suitable soil resulted in the production of a colony of specific microbes.

The search for the microbe of hydrophobia has been long and eager, but one of the reasons why it has so far eluded discovery is its polymorphous character, and the discoverers of the various microbes hitherto described did not associate the different species in one biological connection. A great amount of research was necessary for the comparative study of all the different forms. Another obstacle has been the minute size of the microbe. It only begins to be visible when twelve or fifteen hundred times enlarged, and study and observation are possible only at an enlargement of from two to three thousand diameters. This necessitates the use of the very latest and best instruments, as well as intellect power, manual dexterity, hard work and observation.

The new discovery is of enormous value to the world in general, for while the microbes of many dangerous diseases have been discovered, the medical profession have, so far, been entirely ignorant of that of hydrophobia. The result has been that, while Pasteur's anti-rabies cure has received considerable favour, it nevertheless contains many elements of empiricism, and many medical practitioners bring forward great objections to its use. Moreover, the "virus fixe" of Pasteur consists of a material obtained from the tissues of infected animals, and is, therefore, lacking in those qualities of simplicity, cleanliness and purity which are presented by scientifically propagated microbes. It will now be possible to prepare, from antitoxin and serum, curative substances more simple in nature than the "virus fixe" of Pasteur, and more definite in composition and biological properties.

Professor Sormani has conveyed the details of his discovery to the Medical Association of Pavia, and they have been received with the very greatest interest by the members of this Society. Like most men of genius, Professor Sormani is said to be extremely modest.

STARVATION TREATMENT OF ENTERIC FEVER.

Dealing with the important question of diet in the treatment of typhoid, Dr. Rolleston (*Treatment*) comments on the recent return to the practice of *starving the fever*. Very good results have been obtained by Dr. J. F. Smith with patients kept on nothing but water for four or five days. The *starvation* method was often employed during the late war in South Africa, both at Bloemfontein and elsewhere, with extremely good results. The treatment was very simple; the patients were allowed to drink as much water as they liked, and were allowed 6 oz. of brandy daily. In nearly all the cases, after the third day the temperature began to remit, tympanites to subside, and the tongue to become moist. Hunger was never complained of after the first forty-eight hours. When feeding was re-started it was begun by degrees and in small quantities. Patients often went without food for a week. These and other reports show that, during the severe stages of typhoid fever, starvation can be well borne, and indeed leads to improvement. The use of intestinal antiseptics, such as β-naphthol, betol, salol, and other derivatives or compounds of salicylic acid, is less to the fore than it was ten or fifteen years ago. Experiments show that the administration of such antiseptic drugs by the mouth does not diminish the number of micro-organisms in the fæces. The author has used liquor hydrargyri perchloridi in half-drachm doses three or four times during the twenty-four hours. His strong impression is that it reduces distension and checks diarrhœa. Salol, if given, should be used powdered up, otherwise it may pass through the intestine in a compact tabloid form and be found unaltered in the dejecta. Carboluria may be produced when salol is given in considerable doses, and it may form calculi in the intestines, and set up colic and vomiting.

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