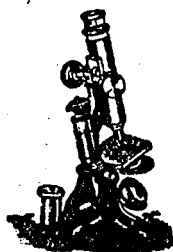


## Medical Matters.

### BOOKS AS HARBOURERS OF DISEASE.



A recent issue of the *New York Times* has an article on the above subject, which says: This is pre-eminently the age of large free libraries, as it is also of microbes. The germ theory of disease has been evolved within a comparatively recent period, and hurtful micro-organisms have been found to lurk in the most unsuspected places. Under these circumstances, then, it is by no means a cause for surprise that attention should be called to the menace to the general health afforded by the much-used public library, and especially by the lending libraries. It is easy to conceive that epidemics of contagious and infectious disease may be quickly spread by the agency of contaminated books, and it is likewise hard to see how such occurrences can be entirely prevented. Books may be sterilised and disinfected, and yet may be full of noxious germs. Our contemporary, however, points out that the recent investigations of German microscopists concerning the number and variety of malevolent micro-organisms found in colonies in the bindings and between the covers of books from the public libraries are not, as is supposed by many, new discoveries. The fact has been known almost for as long a time as bacteriology itself. The multiplication of libraries of late has brought the danger resulting from the circulation of books more prominently before the public, and the question now is how to minimise this danger. Sterilisation, even when effective, is difficult to apply with success to books, and the problem presented does not lend itself easily to solution. Books, or at least some books, improve the mind, but when they, at the same time, injure the body, the reading public may truly be said to be on the horns of a dilemma.

### THE SUNSHINE OF SPRING.

It would be difficult, says the *Lancet*, to estimate the good which a bright, sunny spring brings in its train, what epidemics and disease it may avert. It is fatal to the *materies morbi* which may have survived through the dark days of winter; it purifies the streams, it vitalises the air, and it revives and healthily stimulates the great circulatory processes of both vegetable and animal life.

In short, light is life, yet of the exact nature of the action of light we know very little. Modern discoveries are teaching us that the whole interest of Nature lies in the perpetual degradation and change that are going on not only in the animal and vegetable kingdom, but in the mineral kingdom also. The very enjoyment and agreeable stimulation which we experience from the spring sunshine are gained at a cost which means the sun's degradation. When that degradation is complete, life, as we now understand it, must cease. For aught we know, the sun may be a vast mass of radium which in the process of breaking down gives out heat and light, new elements appearing which possess no radio-activity at all. How immense and almost inexhaustible this energy must be is well illustrated in the apparent permanence as regards thermo- and photo-activity of even a thousandth of a grain of radium.

### VACCINATION AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS.

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* has recently given an account of a sensational experiment which promises to decide the question of vaccination against tuberculosis. Professor Moeller, a pupil of Dr. Koch, some two years since commenced a series of experiments on himself, employing as vaccine the microbes of certain tuberculous animals. In March, 1902, he performed the first operation; in October he followed it up by another, and sustained certain strong symptoms of fever. In December the final test was applied, the symptoms increased, he grew lean and wasting—lost some 15 lb. in weight—then the fever ceased, and the constitution regained its normal state. There is excellent reason for believing that, though the operation may have no effect in regard to the treatment of consumption itself, it is the germ of a discovery which may ensure immunity for those who have a predisposition to the disease.

### THE VALUE OF HEALTHFUL BODILY CONDITIONS.

A Committee which includes many influential members of the medical profession has decided to send to all members of both Houses of Parliament a copy of a petition, praying the central authorities of England, Scotland, and Ireland respectively to consider whether it would not be possible to include in the curricula of the public elementary schools such teaching as may lead the children to appreciate at their true value healthful bodily conditions as regards cleanliness, pure air, food, and drink. It has already been signed by 14,632 persons.

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