

Medical Matters.

THE DISINFECTION OF AN ARMY.



Dr. J. J. Matignon, a member of the French Military Mission to the Japanese Armies of Manchuria, gives in the *Revue d'hygiène* an interesting account of the careful preparations made by the Japanese for the wholesale disinfection of the troops from the seat of war in the late campaign, and this though the army had not suffered from epidemic disease. The whole of the "hygienic manœuvres," resulting in the complete disinfection of 800,000 troops, were carried through without a hitch. A quarantine service was organised under the administration of a General, assisted by a technical committee of engineers and medical officers. Working under this administration were establishments for disinfection and observation hospitals. Every transport arriving from the seat of war was boarded by a disinfecting staff, and every article not carried on the person was disinfected before landing. The debarkation was then effected, every man passing through the quarantine station. Here disinfection of the men were effected by hot sea baths (50 deg. C), while their clothing, equipment, and arms were subjected either to steam under pressure, formalin steam or formalin spray as each case demanded. The quarantine stations were at Aomori, Dairi, Ninoshima, and Wada. Dr. Matignon gives illustrations of two of the stations, as well as of the apparatus employed. Every detail of the ritual followed was carefully planned out even to the cup of tea and cigarette supplied to each man on his exit from his bath. The Japanese have afforded a striking object lesson to other nations as to the practicability of wholesale disinfection, a lesson which we hope will be taken to heart and put into practice in future wars.

THE PRE-INSANE STAGE OF ACUTE MENTAL DISEASE.

Some interesting papers in connection with Mental Disease have recently been appearing in the *British Medical Journal*. One on the Pre-insane Stage of Acute Mental Disease was read at the annual meeting of the British Medical Association at Toronto, by Dr. Campbell Meyers, Neurologist to the Toronto General Hospital. Defining the term mental disease, Dr. Meyers said: "I may first say that by the term 'mental disease' I refer to such as a whole, not from the period at which insanity has developed, but

from the earliest manifestations of mental change to the termination of the disease, either in recovery or death, an entirety of which insanity forms only the advanced stages. The study of the entire disease in this way (which, moreover, is the basis on which we study all other diseases) is, I am convinced, the only means of arriving at a proper comprehension of acute mental disorders."

Dr. Meyer points out the necessity for the early study of acute insanity, which usually develops slowly. Those whose special duty is the care of the actually insane do not see the cases in this stage, and the general practitioner from his lack of instruction in functional nervous diseases, has not recognised their serious nature.

Dr. Meyers considers that wards for mental cases should be established in connection with hospitals as has been done in the case of Toronto General Hospital "Apart," he says, "from the percentage of patients who may be cured in such wards, I am convinced that their formation is urgently demanded in every general hospital where teaching is done, in order to instruct the medical student, the future general practitioner, under whose care these cases must inevitably first come. I believe that clinical instruction is the crux of the whole question, and also that the prevention of insanity will proceed *pari passu* with the instruction in these diseases given to the medical student. Hence I have advocated the treatment of acute mental and nervous diseases through their entire course in general hospitals, where the student could see in the daily round of his work the various stages of the disease, and where he would learn to regard these diseases of the brain with the same, if not with greater interest than he now regards diseases of the lungs. That the treatment of the acute insanities in general hospitals is feasible is being daily demonstrated, hence any doubts on this score are rapidly being removed. Moreover, its treatment in general hospitals would gradually bridge the chasm which has unfortunately developed between alienation and general medicine. To the nursing staff such an addition would be most valuable, since at present no amount of training in a general hospital fits a nurse to take charge of these cases which are so frequent in private practice.

"Finally, I may add that, in assisting the prevention of insanity in the poor, neurology will contribute its quota towards the discharge of its duty to the State—a quota which, when fully developed, will be equalled by none among the many benefits mankind has received from medicine."

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