Medical Matters.

MILK AND CONSUMPTION.

In 1901 a Royal Commission, consisting of the late Sir Michael Foster, Professor E. Sims Woodhead, Professor S. H. Cox Martin, Principal MacFadyean, and Professor R. W. Boyce, was appointed to inquire into the whole subject of the transmission of the infection of tuberculosis and to ascertain, if possible, whether the disease in animals and man is one and the same; whether animals and man can be reciprocally infected with it; under what conditions, if at all, the transmission of the disease from animals to man takes place, and what are the circumstances favourable or unfavourable to such transmission.

In 1904 the Commissioners issued an interim report and have now issued another in which they state: "There can be no doubt that in a certain number of cases the tuberculosis occurring in the human subject, especially in children, is the direct result of the introduction into the human body of the bacillus of bovine tuberculosis; and there also can be no doubt that in the majority at least of these cases the bacillus is introduced through cows' milk. Cows' milk containing bovine tubercle bacilli is clearly a cause of tuberculosis, and of fatal tuberculosis in man.

"A very considerable amount of disease and loss of life, especially among the young, must be attributed to the consumption of cows' milk containing tubercle bacilli. The presence of tubercle bacilli in cows' milk can be detected, though with some difficulty, if the proper means be adopted, and such milk ought never to be used as food. There is far less difficulty in recognising clinically that a cow is distinctly suffering from tuberculosis, in which case she may be yielding tuberculous milk. The milk coming from such a cow ought not to form part of human food, and, indeed, ought not to be used as food at all."

The practical conclusion at which the Commissioners have arrived is as follows:—

"Our results clearly point to the necessity of measures more stringent than those at present enforced being taken to prevent the sale or the consumption of such milk."

FIGHTING THE SLEEPING SICKNESS.

It seems that strong measures are being taken to deal with the sleeping sickness in Central Africa, which has proved such a devastating curse. Writing from Entebbe, Uganda, on December 31st., Reuter's correspondent states that it having been conclusively proved that the tsetse fly is the main, if not the only, means by which the disease can be transmitted, all persons suffering from sleeping sickness are being removed from the fly-infested districts along the lake shore, and placed in specially organised camps or settlements inland, where they will be under medical care and be treated with atoxyl.

It is proposed to create ten sleeping-sickness settlements, and it is expected that provision will have to be made in each one for at least 2,000 sufferers with their families. Only those who are destitute will be maintained at the cost of the Government, but the expense under this head will, in any case, be considerable. It is estimated that an expenditure of nearly £30,000, spread over three years, will be required.

CEREBRO-SPINAL MENINGITIS.

The epidemic of cerebro-spinal meningitis at Belfast appears to be still increasing, and to be causing considerable anxiety in medical circles. The Belfast Corporation have decided to appeal to the municipal authorities in adjoining burghs to join with it in making the disease a notifiable one. It is interesting to learn that Professor Kolle, of Berne, who, as we reported not long since, has discovered a serum which he believes to be efficacious in the treatment of cerebro-spinal meningitis, has sent a quantity of this serum to Belfast, and is confident that in three weeks its efficacy will be established. Meanwhile cases are reported from Glasgow, and suspicious cases have also occurred at Leith.

INOCULATION AND IMMUNISATION.

Lecturing recently at the Royal Institution, Sir A. E. Wright said it was as uncivilised to be carried off by bacterial diseases as to be devoured by wolves, but no serious efforts had been made to get rid of these diseases. The white corpuscles of the blood had become famous under the name of phagocytes because of their capacity for eating bacteria, but bacteria must not be raw but cooked. It had been known for some time that the blood contained three elements which might be said to cook the bacteria and a fourth (opsonin) had been discovered by himself and Dr. Douglas. Rational therapeutics should aim at increasing the power of all four. He hoped to see an inoculation or immunisation department set up by every hospital.

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