

with the quality of the help given at birth, the age of both parents, especially the mother, poverty, and the ignorance or fecklessness of mothers, as factors influencing the death-rate.

We commend the Report and the conclusions embodied therein to the serious consideration of our readers.

Medical Matters.

THE ADDRESS IN MEDICINE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

THE DOMINANCE OF ETIOLOGY IN MODERN MEDICINE.

The Address in Medicine was delivered by Dr. J. Mitchell Bruce, F.R.C.P., Consulting Physician to Charing Cross Hospital, on the above subject.

The lecturer spoke of the dominant position in Medicine which the doctrine of causation had come to occupy in the course of the last quarter of a century. With a few exceptions, the advances of the last 15 years had been in the field of etiology—the discovery of the essential causes of diseases, such as the spirochaetes and the trypanosomes; of media which bring them into relation to man, such as the blood-sucking insects and domestic vermin; of new methods of investigating infective processes, particularly in the blood.

Medical treatment of the infectious processes was relatively disappointing, chiefly because medicine had not the immense advantage of surgery of dealing with the infection in advance of its action. But in many instances successful resistance could be offered to intruding micro-organisms and their toxic products. Immunity could be established by introducing or developing in the blood an anti-product. The discovery for which they were indebted to Pasteur and Metchnikoff and their disciples was, after all, but a scientific confirmation of the correctness of well-established observations, *i.e.*, the susceptibility of some persons as compared with others to infection, which the older observers attributed to delicacy as a predisposing cause. Now the same thing was expressed in other terms. They now said that all persons possessed in some degree a provision of protection or resistance to the action of pathogenic organisms which was a normal, physiological safeguard against infection. This faculty of immunity had been developed by the blood and tissues in the struggle for existence, and was exercised when provoked by the presence of infection, but it was defective or failed in many individuals because of some personal circum-

stance of the present time, or of some remote family or racial weakness. The second point was that even persons with good resistance who could ordinarily harbour germs in their tissues without local damage or constitutional disturbance might, under changed conditions, lose their power of resistance, and then the germs which had been lying inactive suddenly manifested evidences of vitality, with resulting disease in their host. This was a fact of the first importance, because it showed there might be three elements in the causation of acute disease. Firstly, an extrinsic influence, the specific. Secondly, an intrinsic element, the patient's resistance to the specific infection; and thirdly, there might be incidental or concomitant circumstances not essential because not always present, but which occurring incidentally, might favour the essential influence in its invasion of the body, or by lowering resistance, might contribute indirectly to the production of the disease.

THE ADDRESS IN SURGERY.

ON MALIGNANT DISEASE.

Professor Gilbert Barling, of Birmingham, who delivered the Address in Surgery, dealt with the question of cancer and its cure, and said that pathological and clinical knowledge both afforded evidence of the struggle in the human subject between the tissues of the host and the parasite cancer. The existence of this struggle was not always clearly recognised; the tendency was to assume that cancer was a constantly progressive disease, neither halting nor wavering in its course. This was not the case. There was both pathological and clinical evidence that the tissues did resist, that the struggle between them and the diseases was a real one, and that a spontaneous cure was occasionally effected. Lymphatic permeation and fibrosis afforded evidence of this struggle, but unfortunately while the reparative process was occurring in one part the invading epithelium was thrusting further along the lymphatic, so that there was active invasion at the periphery, and recession and recovery at the proximal part of the lymphatic vessel.

The X-rays had a real field of usefulness in relieving pain and in reducing the activity of inoperable growths, but he had never known an unequivocal malignant growth absolutely disappear under the influence of X-rays. At present it was necessary to rely on operative measures as the great remedy for malignant disease. He believed it to be absolutely true that if all malignant growths could be excised at a certain stage in their development all could be cured.

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