

THE OPSONIC INDEX.

One of the most common subjects a nurse meets with is that of bacteriology. It is certainly interesting, but very apt to be briefly dismissed because of the technical difficulties, so I am going to explain some of the definitions which you meet with in any text book on the subject.

We are quite used to saying that infectious diseases will "run their course"; we can prophesy the duration of a case of typhoid fever, but we do not know the *cause* of the limitation—that is still in the future. It may be either by the greater power of resistance of the patient, or by the activity of the invading bacteria, and indeed we can render various diseases less virulent by the use of antitoxine, as in diphtheria, or provide against them—as in the case of small-pox; but though great progress has been made during the last twenty-five years, we are by no means at the end of our discoveries.

When the infection starts, the "demand creates the supply," the leucocytes flock to the rescue, and the condition known as leucocytosis results, so that the danger instead of being hidden, becomes obvious. It has been a known fact for some time now that leucocytes devour and digest the bacteria, but it is only lately that it was discovered that there is a certain "appetizer" also in the blood serum to assist their meals, and that, even when all the leucocytes are removed from a given specimen of blood, there are left certain properties which antagonize bacteria if they are brought in contact with any. These are known as the opsonins, and are auxiliary to the leucocytes, being called by Mr. Bernard Shaw "What you butter your germs with in order to make your white blood corpuscles eat them"!

The opsonic index is the comparison of the activity of the opsonin in a patient suffering from a given germ, and thus proving the resisting power of the blood.

Each opsonin acts only on one single species of bacteria, and therefore, supposing a blood culture shows that the leucocytes readily absorb the tubercle bacillus, it proves that the O.I. is *high* for Tub. Bac. while it might be *low* for another form of bacteria.

In order to use the opsonic index to its greatest advantage in treatment, a daily blood count is often taken to show the amount of vaccine to be used and to note the effect.

A. M. R.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NURSES.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 6th.

EVENING SESSION.

THE SOCIAL WORK OF NURSES.

On August 6th the Cologne Congress had a strenuous day, for not only to the very great pleasure of many, both members of the Congress and residents in Cologne, were the beautiful living pictures of the Pageant repeated, but there was also an evening session on the social work of nurses, presided over by Fraulein Hedwig Busch, of Hanover, when two important papers, one by Miss Nutting on the Department of Nursing and Health at Teachers' College, Columbia University, and the other prepared by a committee of the American Nurses' Association, were presented by Sister Marie Lustnauer, of the City Hospital, Louisville, as well as one by the President, Sister Agnes Karll.

THE WORK AT TEACHERS' COLLEGE.

Miss Nutting stated that the Department of Nursing and Health at Teachers' College, Columbia University, in the City of New York, showed the first attempt in history to provide higher instruction for nurses, beyond that offered by the ordinary hospital training school. For this reason, and because of the importance of the principles on which it was founded, a brief presentation of its history, purpose and achievement had been accorded a place on the programme of the International Congress, as worthy the interest and attention of a body devoted and pledged to a consideration of educational problems in nursing and to the advancement of nursing education.

It was part of the statesmanlike quality of Isabel Hampton Robb's mind that she did not think in individual but in general terms. In looking at the nurse she saw always an army of nurses, reaching far back into the past, stretching forward into the future, spreading and growing and presenting for the world's use either a strong trained and united body of workers or a weak, undisciplined, straggling and unserviceable body. In the training school her glance swept out beyond the special school which she might at the moment represent, and which might by special gifts and opportunities rise high above others, and took in the entire nursing system of the country. She saw hospitals and training schools multiplying in response to many kinds of calls and impulses, charitable and humane, or purely mercenary, and she was constantly impressed with the great difficulty of maintaining good standards, or, indeed, any standards in training schools, under so many and such diverse forms of government, and such fundamentally different conditions of life and work, and her question was, How can we establish definite and satisfactory standards of work which shall be attainable by all schools? I

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