

TYPHUS FEVER.

On Wednesday, October 6th, Professor Sandwith delivered his second lecture on typhus fever. He said that it was believed by some ignorant people that lice were bred spontaneously on certain individuals. This was sheer nonsense. He then pointed out that lice were never found adherent to the skin, but always to the clothing next to the skin. In some parts of South Africa, where the natives were naked, typhus was unknown. Naked slaves in times past have been found to be immune, whilst the civilised and clothed in the same circles suffered from the disease.

For scientific purposes, these insects are difficult to breed and rear without human food, and it was said of a Dutch investigator that for this purpose he kept them under his garter.

In the South African War, where lice innumerable abounded, the infective organism was never introduced, and in consequence there was no typhus.

At the present time among our troops who are suffering from these pests, and who are at present free from the disease, the causative agent may at any time be introduced, and an outbreak of typhus would result.

Professor Sandwith went on to explain the action of vaccines, and their beneficial results. He said that at this time, while the flower of our manhood were counting their lives as nothing for the nation, every means that science put at our disposal should be used on their behalf. Those who from ignorance or prejudice seek to dissuade the men from using them were either fools or traitors.

The American unit lately sent to nurse our armies in France, among which were seventy-five fully trained nurses, were all inoculated for smallpox, typhoid, and typhus. A New York bacteriologist claims to have isolated the bacillus, and Dr. Wilson, of Belfast, the streptococcus.

Typhus was favoured by conditions of starvation, overcrowding, dirt, and exhaustion.

The useful busy fingers of the women of England were, by providing changes of clothing for the troops—the authorities by the good food and the intervals of rest, which were enforced—all safeguarding the Army from this disease.

The Japanese soldier, he said, well knows the importance of cleanliness, and would not think of doing without his daily bath.

With the Russian Army there was a bath train, where two thousand baths could be taken daily.

It was essential that the troops should be

given opportunities for baths and change of clothing. Ordinary washing would not destroy the vermin. Lysol (15 per cent.), dry heat, and petrol were efficacious.

When the history of the present war came to be written from the medical side, none would be able to say how many lives had been saved by the wonders of prophylaxis. A handful of devoted men and women had in a few short months stamped the disease out of Serbia.

In the height of the epidemic, of the handful of Serbian doctors, eighty died in fifty days. He described the terrible condition of the hospitals during that time, when twelve hundred wounded came straight from the Front without their wounds having been previously dressed. It was easy to say the accommodation should have been limited; it was not so easy to refuse the sick and dying who begged for shelter. But the overcrowding baffled description. The mattresses were close together on the floor; the doctors had to walk on them to get from one patient to another. The wounded and typhus-stricken were together. The death-rate averaged ten a day.

The terrible picture the lecturer drew was climaxed by his saying that, on fresh arrivals of sufferers, the overtaxed doctors and nurses were no longer capable of pity, but only of a weary disgust.

On one occasion they were two days without water, and the piteous cries of the sufferers, "Water, Sister, water," were unbearable.

How was this terrible condition of affairs stamped out in two months? By the root of the mischief being attacked.

Professor Sandwith gave it as his opinion that another outbreak is unlikely in Serbia.

SUTURE OF THE SPINAL CORD.

Dr. Girou has described to the Academy of Medicine in Paris a case in which he sutured the spinal cord. The patient was a soldier who was hit by a shell splinter, and the fragment, embedded in the whole breadth of the vertebral canal, completely severed the spinal cord. The operation, performed under disastrous conditions, on a dying man, gave results far beyond anything they were entitled to hope. The patient was now able to move his lower limbs, and his sensory powers were returning, while an enormous sloughing sore, which normally would probably have killed him in a few days, was healing up. The fever had disappeared, and his general condition was good. It is believed this is the first operation of the kind.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)