

The Dangers of Tuberculous Milk.

BY A VETERINARY SURGEON.

THE following article from our American contemporary, *The Trained Nurse*, proves the necessity, upon which medical men now lay so much stress, for the greatest sanitary precautions and carefulness to be exercised with regard to the milk supply of the public:—

"It is a well-established fact that cattle are frequently affected with tuberculosis and die of the disease. Persons not accustomed to the ways of Doctors are apt to think that they may be mistaken when they speak of tuberculous cattle, and the dangers which result to men, women, and children from such cattle. But there is no more difficulty in diagnosing consumption in a cow than in a human being. It is quite easy to see that a particular animal is wasting away. It is just as easy to observe that it is short of breath and has a bad cough. Those symptoms are as patent to the farmer as to the Doctor. When, in addition, the medical man uses his stethoscope, his percussion, his thermometer, and all the other methods of a specialist, the nature of the disease is established beyond a doubt. But if any critic still remains sceptical, the deadhouse offers testimony which cannot for a moment be called in question. Here, for example, is the clinical record of the case of a tuberculous cow:—

"On June 15th, 1878, an experienced Veterinary Surgeon was called to see a red and white cow. The animal had a cough and was short of breath; its temperature was 104deg. Percussion and auscultation showed that one part of the right lung was too solid, and another part had a cavity in it. The Surgeon expressed his opinion that the cow was tuberculous, and advised that she should be destroyed. She was not destroyed; on the contrary, she was kept and milked, and the family used the milk. Six months later the same Veterinary Surgeon was called to visit the cow, and found her with a higher temperature, a quicker pulse, and more rapid breathing. Every sign of tuberculosis was more marked, and again the destruction of the animal was advised. Three months later a further visit showed rapidly advancing tuberculosis, with much emaciation. The family still continued to use the milk, although on the occasion of each visit they had

been advised not to do so. At the end of May, 1879, that is, a little less than a year from the first visit, the Surgeon was called in a great hurry. The cow was evidently dying, and did die in three hours. There was now an opportunity of proving or disproving the tuberculosis theory by means of a post-mortem examination. The examination showed that both lungs were infiltrated with tubercle; and not only so, but that the kidneys, intestines, udder, and other parts, including the flesh, were in a tuberculous condition. Now, the object of giving this history at some length is to relate what followed, and to found an important practical conclusion thereupon. Within three months of the death of the cow, the farmer's baby was taken sick and died. A post-mortem examination was made, which proved that the cause of death was tubercle of the brain and lung. More than a year after that a second child died, also from tubercle of the lung. Those children had not eaten any part of the flesh of the cow, of course, but they had drunk the milk. The moral certainty was that the milk of the tuberculous cow had been the cause of the rapid consumption in the children, for both parents and grandparents were still alive at the time of their death, and no previous case of consumption had ever been heard of in the family.

"There are three practical lessons to be learned from this history. The first is, that the cattle which are reasonably suspected of being tuberculous should be destroyed at the cost of the State; the second, that milk from sickly animals should never be drunk at all, much less when those animals are suspected of tuberculosis; and the third, that the flesh of such animals should never on any account be eaten. Some competent observers believe that tuberculosis originated with cattle, and that it would be entirely stamped out by carefully isolating all the human beings that are consumptive, and killing and destroying the flesh of all the cattle that show any signs of the same affection. That, we consider, is going too far; but the whole subject is well worthy of the serious consideration of both Medical scientists and the public at large."

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