

The Ravages of Consumption

An enemy one three-thousandth of an inch long seems beneath contempt. But this is the average size of the tubercle bacillus, and it has been said that the tubercle bacilli, working as consumption, have killed more people than all the wars and plagues and scourges of history put together. One specialist assures the 70,000,000 people in the United States that at the present rate 10,000,000 of them must inevitably expect to die of consumption. In the abstract, the danger seems comfortably remote; but Dr. Briggs, who has been fighting the disease for the city of New York, declares that every fourth New Yorker dying between the age of 15 and 65, prime of working years, is killed by consumption.

In the face of such statistics, it is no wonder that consumption is the most important problem of the medical world. It is no longer a hopeless problem. For hundreds of years, doctors worked in the dark, meeting the disease as best they could, without any sure knowledge of its character. But twenty years ago, Dr. Koch hunted down the bacillus of consumption, caught it under his microscope and discovered a test which would reveal it, wherever it might be. With that discovery, the outlaws days of the tubercle bacillus ended. It can no longer rest undetected in remote corners of the human anatomy, or pounce upon sensitive lungs from unexpected quarters.

Doctors know now what they are fighting—an infectious disease which can absolutely be prevented. Already the more intelligent treatment of consumption is bearing fruit. In London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, New York and other cities where restrictive measures have been attempted, a remarkable decrease in the number of deaths from this disease has taken place in the last ten years. If the future shows as much improvement in the past, consumption, before long, may be expected to skip the seventh unfortunate person and kill the eighth instead.

Before Dr. Koch's investigations proved the contrary, consumption was supposed to be a hereditary disease. There was a very general belief that children of consumptive parents might as well make their wills and prepare to die at an early age of the same disease. This idea has given way before the certainty that consumption is caused only by bacilli which have been thrown off from a consumptive person or animal. No bacillus, no consumption, is the new axiom. Doctors are convinced that if a child of consumptive parents could be sent to a place where there were no tubercle bacilli and kept there, it might live to the age of Methuselah without contracting the disease. Susceptibility to the disease, however, is passed on, and while those who come of a consumptive line can avoid the disease, it can only be done by using every safeguard against it.

When it was proved that cases of consumption were not assigned by Providence and the hereditary theory was abandoned, the problem took a new turn. Granted that consumption was communicated from one to another, the question was, how? A few experiments with the new test soon answered the question.

A doctor today, with his medical art, learns that a consumptive patient can communicate the disease only through expectoration. But the public in general is slow in recognizing this foundation fact about consumption; until it does, the disease will continue to thrive and flourish.

Moist, the germs are harmless, but as soon as the matter which the consumptive has coughed up and spit out becomes pulverized the germs are released and floating about invisible in the air, or lodging in some convenient place, they lie in wait for their victims. In this way the rooms of careless consumptives may become hotbeds of infection, the wallpaper, even the clothes they wear, may be distributing the bacilli.

The danger is greater because consumption is not a disease which confines the patient to one spot. It often lasts for years, and during all that time the ignorant consumptive walking about the street, riding in cars, working in shops or stores may be a menace to hundreds of persons.

'If we could only make people do what they ought,' said the specialist, 'we could save so many good lives. Sometimes the patients are careless. Sometimes we have trouble with their friends. When we suggest that the expectoration must be scrupulously destroyed, they hold up their hands. 'It would be cruel,' they say. 'We wouldn't for anything make father or

mother or sister or brother or whoever it is do such a thing;

'But the cruelty is on the other side. Patients can save others from infection, and not only that, but they increase their own chances of getting well a hundredfold if they are as careful as they ought to be. With carelessness they can inoculate themselves over and over again. But it is hard to make a family heartbroken over some one they love see that they are selfish instead of kind when they fail to carry out my directions.

'People will run fewer risks when they understand better about consumption. A few laboratory lessons to prove the power and persistence of tubercle bacilli would work a revolution in popular opinion.'

The history of only a few of the cases which abound in medical history are enough to indicate that the specialist knew what he was talking about. One regiment of bacilli deposited in a sleeping room by a man and his wife, who died there of consumption, were powerful enough three years afterward to give consumption to a mother, a little girl and a baby who slept in it.

A young lawyer, perfectly strong and robust, who spent some time at a health resort in a room which had been occupied just before by a consumptive, was attacked by quick consumption and died a few weeks after he returned home. A young girl who went to boarding school well and strong contracted consumption, because the principal had not realized the necessity of disinfecting a room after a consumptive patient.

One case of consumption in a certain apartment was the beginning of a kind of Medical House that Jack built. Twelve deaths which broke up three families that lived in the apartment successively could all be traced back to the original case, because the landlord neglected to clean the apartment and repaper it between tenants.

One mild kindly consumptive who would not voluntarily have killed a fly passed in the disease to at least four other persons because he simply wet his thumb to turn over the pages of a book on which he worked day after day. Each of his successors as he took up the task and poured over the same book breathed in the bacilli which the consumptive had deposited and contracted the disease. The story might have repeated itself a dozen times more if an intelligent doctor had not destroyed that source of infection once and for all.

With the proper precautions these cases and thousands of others like them might be prevented entirely. People are just beginning to realize this, and their interest is quickened by the knowledge that greater safety for the mass of people means greater safety for themselves. Bacilli are no respecters of persons they attack sick or poor with indiscriminating cheerfulness. When one expectorating consumptive who knows no better can distribute seven billions of bacilli, as one well known specialist says he can, the average person begins to feel that the suppression of such consumption is able to start going an endless chain of cases, and no one who prizes life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is anxious to make a link in the chain.

Against the prevalent carelessness and ignorance about consumption, the city authorities of New York have been fighting systematically for eight years. As a result the chances of infection are 30 per cent less for each New Yorker than they were at the beginning. Such a reduction in so short a time is a remarkable tribute to the work of the Health Board. But much still remains to be done. Even last year there were 9,000 deaths in the city from consumption, and to make them materially less the public must put its shoulder to the wheel.

The measures adopted by the Board of Health are comprehensive and as thorough as they can be under the circumstances. Stations have been established all over the city where specimens of sputa can be left by physicians or any other person who wishes to have a test made. These are collected each day examined, a record of the person and the conditioned filed and a report mailed at once. In this way a great number of cases are brought to the notice of the board.

To help in locating consumptives also compulsory registration has been adopted. Every doctor now is required to report the cases of consumption that come to him within seven days. If a doctor is in charge of a consumptive the Board of Health does not interfere in any way. Its work ends

with registration and no one goes to the house unless the doctor requests it. He is supposed to furnish all the necessary information. But consumptives among the poor cannot afford to have a doctor and the greatest possible danger comes from their ignorance. The disease lasts so long that few hospitals will take them in. They drag about their work as long as they can and then as they get weaker and poor they move from one place to a cheaper one down the scale of wretched rooms until they get to the worst of the sunless, airless holes on the East Side, scattering infection as they go.

'We are attacking consumption in three ways,' explained Dr. Briggs who has charge of the work; 'by educating the people, by enforcing sanitary regulations and by examining cows and milk.'

The Board of Health as schoolteacher takes the consumptives of the poor as pupils. The whole city is divided into districts, each under the charge of an inspector. As soon as a case is reported it is turned over to the proper inspector who, armed with his bundle of circulars, starts out to make his rounds. Even among intelligent people consumption is little understood and to the foreign poor who have no thought above their buttons the disease is only another wretched mystery of a hard world.

Huddled in one dingy room, perhaps, with the consumptive, the inspector finds three or four children and babies, playing on the dirty floor, running the risk of infection every time they put their grimy little fists into their mouths, while the consumptive adds to their danger and his own with every racking fit of coughing. The only source of infection is in the expectoration of the consumptive. If this is entirely destroyed no communication need be feared.

But it takes line upon line and precept upon precept to teach such people the why and wherefore, and the inspector some times finds his task almost impossible. When he has explained as carefully as he can what to do, he leaves a circular for reference. The directions are as simple as they can be made and the instructions given in the following extract from the official circular have already served hundreds of times as the ounce of prevention which has made unnecessary the pound of cure. 'It is not dangerous for persons to live with a consumptive, if the matter coughed up by the consumptive be at once thoroughly destroyed. This matter should not be spit upon the floor, carpet, stove, wall or street, or anywhere except into a cup kept for that purpose. The cup should contain water so that the matter will not dry, or better, when possible the cup should contain carbolic acid in a 5 per cent. watery solution (six teaspoonfuls in a pint of water). This kills the germs. The cup should be emptied into the closet at least twice a day, and carefully washed with boiling water.

'Great care should be taken by consumptives to prevent their hands, face and clothing from becoming soiled with the matter coughed up. If they do become thus soiled they should be at once washed with soap and hot water. When consumptives are away from home, the matter coughed up should be received on cloths (or in paper cups made for this purpose), which should be at once burned on returning home. If handkerchiefs be used (worthless cloths, which can be at once burned, are far better), they should be boiled for at least half an hour in water by themselves before being washed. The use of cloths and handkerchiefs to receive the matter coughed up should be avoided as much as possible, because it readily dries on these, becomes separated and scattered into the air. Hence, when possible, the matter should be received into cups. Paper cups are better than ordinary cups, as they with their contents may be burned up after being used. A cheap and convenient form of paper cup for this purpose may be purchased at many drug stores.

'It is better for a consumptive to sleep alone, and all his personal clothes and bed clothing should be boiled for at least one-half an hour separately from the clothing belonging to other people.'

Teaching the people does not end the attempt to suppress infection. The Board of Health aims not only to protect the friends of the consumptive, but also the others who may live in the rooms afterward. With the measures which have been adopted, the mournful possibility of consumption's breaking out even in the third and fourth generations of tenants after a consumptive is prevented. Furniture and bedding are disinfected by the city free of charge. If a patient dies or moves away the landlord is notified that he must cleanse and disinfect the rooms or the apartment or the house as the Board of Health directs.

Walls, woodwork and floors must be thoroughly scrubbed with a certain preparation of washing soda, and calciminizing

and repapering make assurance doubly sure. A notice on the door forbids a new tenant to enter until the work is done. The enforcement of these orders is put in the hands of the Sanitary police, and if the landlord does not carry them out within ten days the Board of Health attorney takes him in hand.

Another precaution which the city has adopted against the spread of consumption aimed at the consumptive abroad, is the familiar sign in every car and public building forbidding expectoration under penalty of the law.

The inspection of milk and the examination of cows and they guard against evasion by seeing them killed. The government seal set on milkcans or meat is as good as an oath that no tubercle bacilli are lurking behind it.

The Board of Health, with all it is doing must stop short at preventive measures. The city has no adequate provision for taking care of consumptive patients, and the poor among them must get along as best they can under unfavorable conditions.

'We can lessen the chances of consumption,' said Dr. Briggs, 'that is all; but if consumptives would take the precautions that they could easily take, even with the odds against us, I feel sure that we could reduce the number of cases one-half.'

If consumptive patients could be sent to hospitals or sanitariums where they could have proper care, a great number of them could be cured who are now a burden to their families and themselves until they die. Each circular about consumption states that 'consumption can often be cured if its nature be recognized early and in proper means be taken for its treatment.'

If tenement consumptives had a sense of humor this information might seem a fine illustration of irony. For fresh air, sunshine and good food make up the trio of remedies which a doctor prescribed for a consumptive, and any one of the three seems as impossible in an East Side street as rain in a desert.

These tenements opening on wells or the narrow tunnel like lanes that serve as streets, are the centres where consumption thrives better than anywhere else in the city. From one single block 102 cases have been reported in less than five years. Another block bounded by Cherry market, Catherine and Monroe streets, had 241 cases of consumption in a population of 3,688. In the Chinese quarter, on the Bowery, wherever people are hoarded together like animals, in airless, sunless rooms, consumption riots with such vigor even disinfection seems powerless to kill the germs.

Yet Dr. Briggs believes that the disease, with proper precautions, could not only be greatly restricted, in just such places, but that it could in time be almost entirely suppressed. He estimates that there are no fewer than 20,000 cases of consumption in the city constantly and half of them at least are in dangerous infectious stage.

Only about one twentieth of the cases are actually under treatment in the public and private institutions of the city, and the first need of all in the crusade against consumption he considers to be hospital provision for 2,500 or 3,000 consumptives. This should be made at once. Afterward ample and comfortable accommodations for the care of all advanced stages of consumption should be provided, pleasant enough to attract sumptives.

More air, light and sunshine in tenements and workshops are necessities, Dr. Briggs declares, if the disease is to be controlled entirely. The bacilli are readily killed by sunlight and strong daylight. Moreover, men, women and children living and working under better sanitary condition and be able to resist more surely what bacilli there were about.

Dr. Briggs' third suggestion involves simply a continued application of the methods which the Board of Health is already using.

Consumption is still a thing to be dreaded, but much of the hopeless unreasoning fear of it, which people feel, fades before a better understanding of its nature. No specific cure has yet been found for it. The bacillus is killed by freezing or burning, but so is the patient. Yet consumption is a curable disease. Even now it is not fatal in the majority of cases. In the future it need be a fatal in only a few.

Individually, the people in New York can help to bring about the consumptive millennium by enforcing the regulations of the Board of Health with their friends and by consulting a physician at the slightest hint of consumption in themselves. If they cannot afford a doctor, a card sent to the Board of Health will bring one, who will tell them free of charge whether they have consumption or not, and if they have what to do for themselves.

Intelligent care, even without change of climate or work, will often save a patient who is in the first stages of the disease. Collectively, the people of the city can

strike at the root of the evil by insisting on better tenement houses and workshops, and by assisting to build sanitariums outside of the city, where hopeless cases can be taken and curable cases made well. With such measures consumption would soon lose its foothold in New York and become one of the comparatively insignificant dangers of the city.

BACK TO HEALTH.

THROUGH THE KINDNESS AND PERSISTENCE OF A FRIEND.

An Every-Day Story That Will Bring Health and Happiness to Young Girls Who Act Upon the Advice Given.

From the Sun, Orangeville, Ont.

In every part of Canada are to be found grateful people who cheerfully acknowledge that the good health they enjoy is due to the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. In the town of Orangeville there are many such people, among them being Miss Lizzie Collins, an estimable young lady who resides with her mother in the eastward. Miss Collins' cure through the use of this medicine was recently brought to the attention of the Sun, and a reporter was sent to get the facts from the young lady. Miss Collins cheerfully accorded the interview, and her statement is given practically in her own words: 'Two years ago,' said she, 'I became so weak that I was forced to take to bed. The illness came on gradually; I found myself much run down, suffered from headaches, and was as pale as it was possible for a living person to be. I used several medicines, but they did not help me. Then I consulted a doctor, and he said that I had scarcely any blood, and that my condition was one of danger. Medicine did not seem to do me any good and I found myself growing weaker. I reached the stage where my heart kept palpitating violently all the time. The headaches became continuous, and my condition one which words can scarcely describe. I really despaired of getting better, and loathed the sight of medicine. I had been confined to bed for about two months when one day a friend called and urged me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. I told her I had lost faith in all medicines, but she was apparently determined I should try the pills, for she brought me about half a box she had been using herself. I could not then do less than try the pills, and when they were used, while I cannot say that I felt much better, I had more confidence in the pills and got half a dozen boxes. Before these were gone there was no doubt that they were rapidly restoring me to my old-time health, as I was soon able to sit up and then be around and out. I used in all eight or nine boxes, and before these were gone I felt as though I had never had an ache or pain in my life. That is what Dr. Williams' Pink Pills did for me, and I think I would be very ungrateful if I did not add my testimony for the benefit it may be to some other young girl.'

Miss Collins' story should bring hope to many thousands of other young girls who suffer as she did. Those who are pale, lack appetite, suffer from headaches, and palpitation of the heart, dizziness, or a feeling of constant weariness, will find renewed health and strength in the use of a few boxes of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. Sold by all dealers or sent by mail, post paid, at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50, by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

A Thermometer Eight Miles Up.

The exploration of the air by means of balloons carrying self-registering instruments is pursued with much vigor in Europe. On Feb 27 there were simultaneous ascents from many points, extending from France to Austria and Russia. One unmanned balloon near Paris reached an elevation of 41,656 feet, not much short of eight miles. The temperature of the air at that height, as shown by a self registering thermometer, was 67° below zero, Fahrenheit. Another balloon near Berlin found the same temperature at an elevation 10,000 feet less. These experiments are expected to throw much light on the laws of storms and of atmospheric circulation.

A Wholesale Assault.

Farmer Stackpole—I guess, Cap'n Hooks, the postmaster at the village, is dead—sure he is goin' to hold his position durin' the next four years.

Farmer Honk—What makes you think so Eli?

Farmer Stackpole—Wa-al, I noticed this afternoon that he's just had the front of the buildin' repainted and has stuck up a placard sayin', 'This paint is fresh and sticky. Everybody, please feel of it and convince yourselves.'

SEPTICS TURN

BELIEVERS

AND ARE CURED.

Dr. Agnew's Catarrhal Powder a Great Blessing.

'When I read that Dr. Agnew's Catarrhal Powder could relieve Catarrh in 10 minutes I was far from being convinced. I tried it—a single puff through the blower afforded instant relief, stopped pain over the eyes and cleansed the nasal passage. Today I am free from Catarrh.' B. L. Egan's (Easton, Pa.) experience has been that of thousands of others and may be yours.'