

“Tuberculosis.”

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Health, wealth and wisdom! That is the fabric of life! But mankind has proved that wealth is, either a curse or a blessing. Wisdom—a superior blessing, but ah! Health! It has its values! No one can deny the values of health! Health means happiness, efficiency and success, while ill-health means incompetence and failure.

But ‘Per dua ed estra!’—“To the stars by rough roads” Yes! We have many difficulties to face and problems to solve before we can ever achieve health—the ‘greatest blessing’ that God has ever bestowed upon mankind! Nations of the world are pestered by all kinds of diseases. But each one of us will have to go through the Valley of Death by one way or the other. And Tuberculosis is one of the well-worn paths leading to the Valley of the Shadow of Death! It is the “White Man’s Plague”, for in the nineteenth century, twentyfive percent of the people who died in Europe died of this disease. It is a chronic disease, a social disease, and a disease of civilization, for it is estimated that nine percent of the whole civilized world die of tuberculosis. It is common in crowded localities, less in highlands than in plains and less in sea-coasts than in the interior.

In 1822, Professor R. Coch, a German scientist, discovered that tuberculosis is contracted by a special kind of bacterial life called the Tubercle Bacillus. This germ is rod-shaped and is so small that it can only be seen by means of a microscope. This organism has considerable powers of endurance, and can live a long time in the air and among dust and dirt, but is killed by five minutes exposure to bright sunlight.!

The disease is very infectious; the germs being capable of getting into the human system in many ways. They probably attain access to the air by the sputum of the consumptive patients who have the very disgusting habit of expectorating in the most obnoxious fashion. Such dust which have been wafted about by the wind, when inhaled through the respiratory track, may set up consumption in the person who has been taken in the bacillus.

It is found that thirty per cent of the domestic cows of India are consumptive. So when people drink the milk or eat the meat of the tuberculous cows, the bacilli get into the human body by means of the alimentary track. Another method of contraction is by coming into contact with the person suffering from the disease.

When such causes are considered, there can no longer be any wonder that consumption is so common when a single case may infect many others. It is discovered by post-mortem examinations that ninety-five per cent of the people have the bacilli. In spite of its omnipresence, only a small portion is actually attacked. The explanation is that the germ in all probability can do no damage unless some predisposing cause or causes have been doing their work previously in rendering the body susceptible to the attack of the bacilli. These predisposing causes are exposure to dusty atmospheres, working in over-crowded and badly ventilated rooms, injudicious or deficient food and alcohol. Those who have been attacked by whooping cough, measles, influenza, etc, which make their lungs weak, are susceptible to the disease. Heredity plays a very small part in its causation. Those who are thin-chested or weak, those who lead a sedentary life, and those who indulge in excesses of all kinds are most prone to the disease.

The Tubercle Bacillus may attack any part of the body. When it attacks the skin it causes the disfiguring lupus, when it attacks the glands it causes scrofula which is serious. In the brain it causes meningitis. Tuberculous joints and bones (acute spinal curvature) are still more dangerous to life, but the commonest site is the lungs where it causes Phthisis or consumption, the most

infectious form, on account of the greater likelihood of the bacilli being scattered about by the sufferer.

But are we going to let this disease rule and dominate us forever! No, we shall not. We must banish the disease from this world and establish a Land of Health.

But to do this we must attend to a great number of things. First and foremost let us keep ourselves fit, that is, we must not let ourselves become run down. The second line of defence is carefulness on the part of the consumptives. They should expectorate into special spittoons or handkerchiefs of cheap material that can be burnt. We must make sure that milk and food is free from the tubercle bacilli by boiling it or cooking it thoroughly.

If the symptoms indicated by a slight flush in the cheeks, night sweats and loss of energy are apparent, a competent doctor should be consulted, for in early stages, the disease is curable. Good and nourishing food is necessary, for mal-nutrition is one of the chief causes of consumption. Taking daily exercise in the open air will purify the blood and refresh the body. Healthy surroundings and well-ventilated rooms are essential; over crowding and intemperance should be avoided.

It is discovered that Calmette's inoculation prevents contraction of the disease. The ultra-violet rays of the sun kill the germs also. In European countries, this fact has been taken advantage of, and consumptives are sent up in aeroplanes and are exposed to the sun's rays.

So if we can abolish the disease with carefulness on the part of the consumptions and on our part by making ourselves fit and by taking precautions, why not try to do it? If we do our little duties and set our hearts to be victorious, then we might overcome the disease, reducing the world of its failures, incompetences and miseries and perhaps herald the dawn of a World of Health Happiness and Prosperity!