

A most important and promising field of pathological study, at present only partly cultivated, is found in the infectious diseases of animals and of plants, not only on account of the great economic interests often involved, but also as a means of widening and deepening our conceptions as to the causes, development, prevention and treatment of infectious diseases in general. Any pathologist who is at all familiar with the remarkable and peculiar conditions under which the so-called Texas Cattle Fever of the United States develops and spreads, will realize that the complete elucidation of all the etiological factors of this disease not only would contribute to the solution of a great economic question, but also would open fresh points of view in our conceptions of infectious agents and their properties. When we consider the many conditions which it is in our power to control in studying animal diseases, and above all the possibility of submitting to an experimental crucial test our conclusions, it is clear that the study of natural and artificial infections, as well as of many other diseases in animals, is calculated to advance in the highest degree the science of pathology. It is not a small thing that questions which were once considered to be wholly transcendental, as for instance the doctrine of immunity against infectious diseases have been brought within the working domain of experimental pathology.

Nor is it in the causation of infectious diseases alone that the comparative study of human and of animal diseases is destined to advance etiology. It is reasonable to expect that this comparative study will help to clear up many factors, at present obscure, in the causation of human diseases, including the influence of social conditions.

But let us take a broader view of comparative pathology than that which considers abnormalities only in man and in animals related to man in structure and function. I believe that many problems and facts in human pathology await for their complete elucidation the same application of the comparative method of study which has made of normal anatomy virtually a new science. What a barren mass of apparently unrelated facts is human anatomy when studied without reference to comparative anatomy and embryology! If knowledge is the

understanding of the real nature of a thing, and how it came to be as it is, then there is no knowledge of human anatomy without the aid of comparative anatomy and embryology. How difficult and unmeaning is the old method of studying the anatomy of the human brain and how fascinating does the anatomy of this organ appear in the light of development!

A light similar in kind, if not equal in intensity, will be shed upon human pathology by a fuller insight into comparative pathology. We possess at present scarcely the rudiments of a comparative general pathology, but how useful and significant is even our fragmentary knowledge of this subject. The charm and impressiveness with which Metschnikoff has developed and presented the phagocytic doctrine is due largely to illustrations drawn from comparative pathology. It is impressive to see pictured in living forms from the lowest up to the highest, the combat with invading micro-organisms of infection. While the phagocytic doctrine can not be accepted in its entirety, it is interesting to observe that it received its origin and its chief support from observations made upon the lower forms of life, rather than from those on man and the higher animals.

The interesting and important discoveries concerning the curious parasitic organisms associated with malaria may seem to the student of human pathology anomalous and without analogy, but in Prof. Wright's admirable address to-day upon the sporozoa, we have had presented to us not only the life history of the class of organisms to which the malarial parasites probably belong, but also many examples of similar parasitic affections of lower animals. We may expect still further information concerning this interesting group of infectious micro-organisms from researches in comparative pathology.

Take for instance one of the most disputed and still unsettled problems in pathology, the conditions which cause multiplication of the fixed cells of the body, a question which is intimately associated with the still broader one of the response of cells to the action of external stimuli. Can it be doubted that if we were acquainted with the behavior of cells in all types of living things from the unicellular