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Original Articles

THE IDENTITY OF HUMAN AND AVIAN DIPHTHERIA.*

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Diphtheria of the lower animals, especially of fowls and pigeons, has been the subject of numerous investigations: and when we examine the literature, we are immediately struck by the differences of opinion regarding the disease. On the one side, we have those who believe that the diphtheria of men and of birds are identical, and on the other side, those who believe that the one disease has no relation to the other.

If the two diseases are identical, that is, if both are caused by the same organism, the Klebs-Loeffler bacillus, we should have to demand the most rigorous treatment of diseased birds, and the disease would occupy a place of importance as high as that now accorded to bovine tuberculosis. But does our experience of the occurrence of fowl diphtheria and diphtheria in the human being lead us to the conclusion that there is a probability of there being any connection between the two diseases? Is not diphtheria a disease which is more prevalent in towns and closely populated districts, where very few fowls are kept? Is not roup at certain seasons almost universally prevalent in some poultry yards in the country, where there may be hundreds of cases of the disease without a single case of diphtheria among those who look after the birds and treat them from day to day? Has it ever been observed that poultrymen are more frequently attacked with diph-

* Read at the annual meeting of the Executive Health Officers' Association of Ontario, at Berlin, September, 1902.