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SELECTED ARTICLES.

TUBERCULOSIS.

For generations the medical community, as well as the general public, have, in the campaign with phthisis and tubercle, been content to act only on the defensive. For many years they clung to the erroneous idea that this fell disease was hereditary and incurable; the researches of the latter half of the present century have revealed many interesting facts which have revolutionised these crude ideas and placed us all in a position to help in the possible extinction of this dreaded enemy of the human race. It was no easy discovery that phthisis is due to a specific organism, for even after it had been proved and universally accepted that many of the zymotic diseases were due to bacteria, it could not be demonstrated that tubercle was. And why? Because the bacillus tuberculosus defied the stains that were then used for the other organisms. Research then had to be made for a useful stain, and one which could be used as a distinctive test and a diagnostic factor. This was soon forthcoming, and now we are able to catch the enemy in his lair, and point to the offender, yes, and fix him and stain him. The organism, then, being found, identified, and his habits and mode of development studied, it can be safely asserted that tubercle is no more hereditary than is typhoid fever or diphtheria. The only thing that we can truthfully say is, that there is hered-

itary tendency to it by the preparation of the constitution for the encouragement of its growth, should it find an entrance into the system. Even this declaration is in all probability too boldly made, and we shall find ere long that the tendency to tubercle is not so very great after all.

The next discovery of importance was: Tuberculosis, even if manifested as phthisis, is curable. This fact should have been more readily seized and utilised in studying a cure; for it had long been observed that patients placed under good hygiene, and surrounded by a healthy atmosphere, either recovered or improved greatly. More than this, the various hospital autopsies proved that individuals dying from other causes had during some portion of their life, been the subjects of tuberculosis of the lungs.

Another important discovery, which is only just being utilised, is the fact that tuberculosis is contagious; not, however, by contact with the individual suffering therefrom, but through the inhalation of the organisms or spores expectorated by the sufferer. Sir William Broadbent in a recent speech went so far as to say that if they could secure the destruction of all that was ejected from the lungs of persons suffering from phthisis, and ensure a supply of milk and meat absolutely free from tubercle bacilli, all tuberculous disease would cease from the land.

Two things have recently been firmly established: That tuberculosis is curable, and that it is preventable. How far, then,