

TRACHOMA BODIES*

By W. H. LOWRY, M.D., TORONTO.

The causative factor of trachoma is one that has been most elusive. We have known for a long time that trachoma is an infectious disease, and many observers have isolated different cocci, bacilli and fungi as being its cause, but none of these organisms have stood the test. Now, an organism, the nature of which is not too well understood, is being discussed by pathologists, and it seems a promising one, since the same factor is being found by observers in many countries.

In April, 1907, Halberstaidter and Prowazek described very minute bodies which they found in the epithelial cells taken from the conjunctiva of trachomatous eyes. A month or so later Greeff, Frosch and Clausen published observations of the same character, and since that time these bodies have been found by observers in Japan, Russia, Germany, Great Britain, the United States, Canada and Egypt.

These bodies which we will for the time call trachoma bodies are smaller than the smallest cocci, and are found in clusters of varying size and shape, in the protoplasm of an epithelial cell. Sometimes the clusters are close to the nucleus and cap an end of the nucleus, but more often there is a clear space of protoplasm intervening. The little granules which compose a cluster, or trachoma body, are so small that one cannot make out their definite shape. It appears that these bodies, commencing as a very small cluster of granules, gradually enlarge and invade the cell protoplasm until the latter is no longer to be seen, when the cell ruptures, and is taken care of by the leucocytes which in the meantime surrounded it. Sections of tissue to show the deeper cells of the conjunctiva have also shown the trachoma bodies.

As to their nature, these organisms are supposed to be somewhere between a protozoa and a bacterium. Prowazek suggests calling them "chlamadozoa," and he thinks they are of similar character as the organisms of scarlet fever, variella and hydrophobia.

Each observer has made control examinations of healthy con-

*Read at Canadian Medical Association, June, 1910.