

CHAPTER III

THE SKIRMISH AT THE OUTPOSTS

FOR practical purposes only two avenues through which the enemy may gain access to the human body need be considered. It is possible, of course, that the tubercle bacillus, like the blood-poisoning germ, may get in through a cut in the skin, caused accidentally, or by such foolishness as tattooing, or scratching a pimple; but nearly always the first portal is the nose or the mouth. He may be breathed in with the dust, but the nose is so equipped that normally it arrests 95 per cent. of the dust and germs in the air that passes through it. You must see that you are not a mouth-breather, for your chances of breathing in germs are thereby twenty times greater than if you breathed through a healthy nose.

It is doubtful if as many germs get through the air-passages into the lungs as is popularly supposed. If you have ever opened the gullet of a frog that has been killed, and sprinkled on it a few particles of cork dust, you will have seen how all the particles slowly travelled down the membrane and finally dropped off. This, you will find upon careful examination, is owing to a perfect forest of little hair-like processes called cilia which wave together like a field of golden grain bowing before a gentle breeze. Softly but surely the little particles of dust are wafted along, all in