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THE EXPERIMENTAL PRODUCTION OF ANTITOXIC SERA AND THEIR VALUE IN THE TREATMENT OF TUBERCULOSIS.

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IN the following pages the writer has attempted to give a brief account of some interesting experiments that have occupied his attention for some months past, and to discuss the present status of the tuberculosis question, more especially in regard to certain therapeutic problems involved.

No one in the present day will deny that one of the most important subjects that can occupy the attention of scientific minds is the discovery of some specific curative agent for the treatment of tuberculosis. The disease in question is almost universally admitted to be the greatest scourge from which humanity is suffering. The discovery of an antitoxic serum for diphtheria, and the brilliant results that have followed its use, opened up a new chapter in the story of rational therapeutics, and we fancied ourselves on the verge of the most startling advances. Yet, in spite of the continued investigations of some of the ablest of our experimentalists, the brightness of this first promise has not been realized, and we have to confess to a certain degree of disappointment in the results hitherto achieved. The problem is by no means so simple as, at first sight, it appears, and the numerous attempts at its solution on the lines of Behring and Roux's classic researches have to a large extent proved to be failures. We may be prepared, to some extent, to understand this if we consider in what way tuberculosis differs from the majority of infective diseases. Tuberculosis is not a self-limited disease nor does it, so far as we know, kill by septicaemia. It belongs to the same group of affections as syphilis, leprosy, and actinomycosis, in which the characteristic lesion is the inflammatory granuloma. We have, therefore, on the one hand effects referable to circulating toxins, and, on the other, local destructive or constructive lesions, which lead to grave disturbance of the organ involved, with possibly certain remote mechanical effects. It will readily be understood that this condition of things is quite different from that which obtains in, say, diphtheria, where we