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Special Articles

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL OF TUBERCULOSIS

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One of the most striking features of the social development in all civilized countries during the last twenty-five years has been the widespread interest and the increasing knowledge and intelligence among the masses of the people, in all matters relating to the public health and to the prevention of disease. In almost all large cities in the countries with a modern civilization, there has been a steadily decreasing general death rate, with a still greater decrease in the amount of sickness. Very few persons realize the very great influence that this decrease in morbidity and mortality has had in contributing to the unparalleled industrial progress of this time.

No feature of this great movement has been more impressive or more important than the world-wide campaign, which has been instituted for the prevention of that greatest remaining disease scourge of the civilized world—tuberculosis, and in no other matter have more definite results been obtained. The significance of the discoveries of Koch to the solution of the sanitary problems presented by this disease, was, perhaps, even more quickly recognized in America than in Europe, and various sanitary authorities as early as 1886 and 1887, began to make some attempts to deal with the problem.

In Germany, the movement for the prevention of tuberculosis first took form in the establishment of sanatoriums for the treatment of incipient cases of this disease, and this movement rapidly gained impetus. In England, also, numerous hospitals and sanatoriums for the special treatment of tuberculosis were early established, some of them even before the demonstration of the infectious nature of this disease.

Systematic attempts by the sanitary authorities to deal with the tuberculosis problem in a large and comprehensive way were first instituted in the United States, and in New York City as early as 1894, a fairly satisfactory system of control was in operation. It was nearly ten years subsequent to this, however, that the movement became widespread, and the various phases of the problem began to be generally dealt with in a more or less effective manner by sanitary authorities. During the last ten years really astonishing progress has been made in most of the larger communities in various parts of the civilized world, and in many cities most comprehensive organizations, both voluntary and governmental in character, have been built up.

I desire to describe to you here what, in my opinion, constitute some of the essen-