

that it was one of the firmly established facts of medicine that the most frequent cause of this condition is the irritative effect on the substance of the liver of the strong solution of alcohol absorbed from the stomach. But as this irritant is a chemical agent, and not a pathogenic microbe, Professor Roy says we should not call the results it produces inflammation.

Eczema is now classified as a simple non-contagious inflammation of the skin, and, as has been shown by Hebra, all the different varieties of it can be produced, or, at least, imitated, by the application to the skin of solutions of croton oil of various strengths. Workers in paint factories, where arsenical preparations are handled, are particularly liable to severe inflammatory affections of the skin. If a person burns a finger by touching the stove, almost immediately the ordinary signs of inflammation commence.

It would be easy to multiply instances where the inflammatory process, at least as we at present understand it, is evidently and directly due to chemical, mechanical, or thermic irritation. It may be urged that even in these cases it is impossible to exclude the action of microbes, but most observers will conclude that, although they may be present, their action is practically *nil*. This is the reasonable conclusion, unless it can be shown that these irritants do not cause inflammation when applied with aseptic precautions. I am not aware of any experiments conducted for the settlement of this point, so far as the application of irritants to the surface of the skin is concerned; but irritant substances such as croton oil in aseptic glass tubes have been inserted underneath the skin with rigid aseptic precautions, and after the healing of the surface wound without suppuration the tubes have been broken. In such cases inflammation resulting in the formation of pus has occurred, but it is stated by some experimenters that this pus is sterile, *i.e.*, it is non-inoculable, and does not contain streptococci, and it is also said to be poisonous to streptococci.

If these experiments are confirmed, they would appear to indicate a very important distinction between inflammation caused by pathogenic microbes and that caused by ordinary irritants. But cannot this distinction be sufficiently indicated without making such a radical change in nomenclature as has been proposed by some? Professor Roy, in the previously mentioned lecture, says: "I will only remind you that although by chemical and other means a process apparently identical with what may be called the normal inflammatory reaction can be produced, yet that we must look upon these as cases where the inflammatory process has been called for by other than its legitimate cause; the cause, that is to say, to meet which it has been evolved in the animal kingdom, namely, a local invasion of pathogenic microbes."

To those of us who do not feel the necessity of making all our ideas