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SUGGESTIONS FOR PREVENTING THE SPREADING OF INFECTIOUS AND CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

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You have probably heard learned disquisitions regarding the so-called germ theory of disease. It is sometimes called the graft theory; there is also the glandular theory, and various other titles have been given to explain this class of epidemic diseases. Great battles have been fought by learned sanitarians, as if the very existence of sanitary progress depended upon the unconditional acceptance of one or other of the views of the combatants. These combats appear to me very much like those which occasionally arise between such individuals as Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and are really of no consequence to you except so far as they require to be explained. I believe that the learned authors are wrong in some points, but they are right in others. It is not necessary to deny the truth of the glandular theory in some cases, because I hold that the germ theory is right in others, and because I feel sure that disease is sometimes produced by parasitic life, I am not quite shut out from the belief in the possibility of chemical origin in others. No one who has studied the causes of itch, or has had to treat some of the diseases of the skin which are produced by parasitic life, can doubt that such states can arise. Such hold has this idea of parasitic disease had upon the minds of some men that the founder of a sect in unorthodox medicine promulgated the theory that disease in general had its origin in the presence of animalculæ in the human blood, and that sulphur was a sovereign remedy because it was fatal to the itch insect. The imagination of the practitioner was not altogether at fault. It is now found that several diseases are at any rate accompanied, if not caused by, parasitic life in the blood of the victim. This is especially the case in some cattle diseases and in those maladies which are ostensibly caught by human beings from animals. Whether that life is animal or vegetable is a doubtful point. I am satisfied myself that all those diseases which require a time for incubation,