

ON THE CAUSES AND PREVENTION OF TUBERCULAR CONSUMPTION IN MANKIND AND THE DOMESTIC ANIMALS.—*Concluded.*

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF CURING THE DISEASE AND THE PERIOD OF ITS INCUBATION.

The period of incubation—the time which elapses between the reception of the contagion into the body and the first manifestation of symptoms of tuberculosis—has not been well defined. Tubercles have been found in the lungs of animals in from ten to twenty days after inoculation. The interval or period is usually regarded as from a week or two to some months.

While a cure of this disease even in the form of pulmonary consumption, in the early stage, in the case of the human organism has not been an uncommon occurrence, tuberculosis in the domestic animals always, it is said, terminates fatally. How far Koch's recently discovered remedy will improve the prospects of a cure of the disease in mankind or the lower animals time alone can tell. Notwithstanding all the excitement and hope to which this new discovery has given rise, medical journals claim that in the large well equipped hospitals and such special institutions for the cure of consumption, a very large proportion of the cases in the early stage (in which stage alone Dr. Koch claims that his remedy will cure) are relieved of all the symptoms in about the same length of time that is claimed for Koch's remedy—in from four to six weeks. Most of the success of the treatment in these institutions is universally admitted to depend upon what are commonly called hygienic remedies—abundance of pure fresh air, suitable food, freedom from all sources of irritation, and good nursing. Moreover, Dr. Koch is careful to expressly warn us that in the application of his remedy these conditions are just as essential.

While then we have reason to hope that in the future consumption may be more frequently cured than in the past, PREVENTION should ever be the great chief aim of all. Koch even now admits that if this disease is to be eradicated, individuals and governments must do more than ever to have the general rules and regulations pertaining to health which have been discovered and made known by sanitarians, well attended to,—practically applied and enforced.

Prevention, therefore, both in the case of man and the domestic animals, offers vastly better and more profitable results than all efforts at cure, at the best. It is simpler and more practical, and is consequently of the FIRST importance.

EARLY SYMPTOMS OF THE DISEASE.

IN THE HUMAN BODY, even as in the lower animals, the earliest symptoms of tuberculosis may be and sometimes are overlooked. Indeed, the early inroads of the bacillus may not for some time in some individuals give rise to any appreciable symptoms. In some cases of consumption, for example, considerable progress may have been made by the parasite in the lungs before cough is noticeable. It is probable, however, that in all cases there may have been noticed by a close observer, at least a want of good vigorous health, with lassitude, weakness and less disposition to exertion, and probably some failure of the appetite and loss of bodily weight. Such symptoms manifested in any one at all hereditarily predisposed to the disease should receive the most prompt, skilful and careful attention. The disease once at all suspected even, I would observe here, not a day should be lost in applying remedies : which must even now as we have seen be chiefly of a hygienic or preventive character.

The symptoms which soon commonly follow these earliest indications of failing health in cases of pulmonary consumption, or when the bacilli have once taken root and multiplied to any considerable extent, are familiar to all, and no practical end would be served by even naming them here.

IN COWS, when the disease commences locally and remains for weeks or months very slowly progressing, as it most commonly does, no symptoms at all may be manifested to a casual observer, in fact it is quite possible the animal may appear to be in a singularly fine condition, and also give abundance of milk, for some months.