

sickness and premature deaths—have perhaps naturally enough bestowed almost their whole thoughts and time, given in this behalf, to those diseases which prevail epidemically and in a short period of time destroy many lives, or which prevailing only endemically or to a much less extent, destroy life more rapidly—in a few days or a few weeks, while this dreadful disease, consumption, which is daily cutting off, after months and years of hopeful, yet mostly hopeless suffering, vast numbers of lives—often the brightest, most useful, most valuable lives, has not received from practical sanitarians, that practical consideration which its great importance demands.

THE DISEASE IN ANIMALS.

Tubercular consumption effects many if not all of the domestic animals, more especially, in this country, cows and fowls. It may not be very common; some assert that it is not. But no investigations have been made, and it may, in view of its prevalency in other countries, be more common here than is generally supposed. Enquiries are being made at the present time by the publishers of the *SANITARY JOURNAL* in reference to the prevalency of this disease in some of the domestic animals in this country, and the results of the enquiries will be made known in a future number.

CAUSES OF CONSUMPTION.

The causes of consumption may be best considered under three principal heads, viz: heredity, contagion, and personal habits and the surroundings of life.

Probably in every case of consumption each one of these causes has taken part in the development of the disease—each, in a degree small or greater, according to circumstances. Some constitutional defect in connection with the respiratory organs has been inherited, it may have been from ancestors somewhat remote, or apparently so, and the defect may have been but slight at first and gradually developed and in-

creased by habits of life. The specific contagion—the tubercle bacillus itself, it may be, is then received into the body from another case of the disease, for there can be hardly any doubt that the disease is contagious, and it appears very probably that the bacillus is the contagious principle. The condition of the body proves suitable for the development and multiplication of this contagion, and probably habits of life and environments favor its multiplication until it becomes as it were “master of the situation”—the human organism, divine, is overcome and its life destroyed by the microbe.

HEREDITY.

The influence of heredity in consumption appears to be greatly misunderstood, especially by many outside the medical profession. Consumption can hardly be regarded as hereditary in anything like the same degree, or even in the way, that syphilis is. It seems improbable that there is anything more transmitted from parent to offspring than certain constitutional or structural defects in bodily organization; and these defects are probably chiefly connected with the respiratory organs. It has been stated that in the inherited tubercular diathesis, the minute lymphatic vessels are smaller than in persons of sound vigorous constitutions; whether as cause or effect is not known. Might not the diminished caliber of these vessels be the result of imperfect respiratory capacity, with imperfect performance of the excretory functions? Practically, this is a matter of comparatively little consequence.

The following extracts bearing upon this are deductions from a report on causes of consumption, compiled from answers, by medical practitioners, to a series of questions sent out by the editor of this *JOURNAL* about three years ago, which answers were based upon over 250 cases of well marked tubercular phthisis which came under the observation of these