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ON AVOIDING AND PREVENTING INFECTION.

IT has been popularly believed, and the belief is yet somewhat prevalent, that physicians know of and practice some secret means of preventing infections taking effect upon them. We need hardly say to the readers of this JOURNAL that this is as untrue as it is absurd. It is plain, and it is very commonly believed by medical men, that when the bodily functions are all performed in a healthy and vigorous manner the infections or germs of disease will rarely if ever take root or succeed in establishing colonies in the body. It may be that, with even a strong healthy condition of the system, a very large number—a large “dose,” of the germ finding access into the blood may overcome all resistance and give rise to the specific disease. But this will very rarely happen.

The germs or bacilli of disease find their way into the body in various ways. Typhoid fever and cholera germs are probably always taken into the body by way of the stomach usually, along with the food or drink, and in a healthy stomach will usually if not always be destroyed before they can get any further. The bacillus of tubercle and the germs of diphtheria, smallpox, scarlet fever and measles may possibly be received into the blood by way of the lungs. It seems probable however that sound healthy lungs will resist the entrance of all germs into the blood, and that in such cases the germs would be exhaled with the expired air. In many of those cases in which the infection seems to have been received through the lungs, it is probable that it rather formed a lodgment in the throat or mouth during inspiration and was then swallowed with the saliva. It is well known that many

infections may gain access to the blood through a slight abrasion of the cuticle, the least little scratch or sore, and these develop and cause their specific disease. We not long ago reported a case in which the germs of tubercle were communicated by means of ear-rings or pendants which had been worn by one who had died of consumption. The jewels being, after the death, worn by a healthy young girl, whose ears could not have been perfectly sound; tubercle developed at one ear spread to the glands of the neck and then became general throughout the body, Syphilis is not unfrequently communicated by an infected pipe when the mouth is not perfectly sound, and it has been clearly demonstrated that the tubercle bacillus may develop in the lungs if there be the slightest defect in the mucous lining of these organs at which the germ can form a lodgment.

In a late number of The British Medical Journal (Jan. 11 '90) it is stated that Professor Nussbaum recently said: “Since Koch discovered the cholera comma bacillus it has come to be known that no human being living at the place where the epidemic rages escapes this poisonous fungus, for it is in the air we inhale, in the water we drink, upon the food we eat. It is in the soil, and when this is moist and unclean multiplies with extraordinary rapidity. In spite of this fact, in a city of, say, 200,000 persons, visited by cholera perhaps but 1 per cent., that is, 2,000, will be attacked. The other 180,000 persons remain unimpaired in health, although they have all inhaled, swallowed and drunk the cholera bacillus. It is known with certainty that the cholera bacillus is dangerous only to those persons whose stomach