

THE PREVENTION OF TUBERCULOSIS.

by

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The disease known as Tuberculosis, Phthisis, or Consumption, altho a very grave one, is certainly a preventable one. Nearly everybody knows that if taken early it is curable, but what I want to impress on my readers at present is that it is preventable. It is a disease which can be prevented from fixing upon people—usually young people—in a way which it is not possible to do, as regards prevention, in the case of a great many other infectious diseases, for Tuberculosis or Phthisis, is certainly infectious. Thus one cannot prevent measles, chicken-pox or cancer in the same certain way in which we can prevent or ward off Tuberculosis. This immense achievement has only comparatively lately been put within our power: for hundreds of years the disease was thought to be hereditary and practically incurable. Only quite recently have we known how to protect ourselves from the Tuberculosis because only recently have we learned the actual cause, the definite source, of the infection of Tuberculosis. Nothing about it is hereditary except a predisposition to be infected. It was a great day for suffering humanity when the late Professor Robert Koch in Germany found in the year 1881 that the true cause or origin of the infection known as Phthisis was the growth within our bodies of a very minute vegetable parasite or microscopic fungus, thenceforth called the *Bacillus tuberculosis*. In popular language this is the "germ" or "microbe" of Phthisis.

Before we go any further, we might clear up the names given to this disease. Phthisis is derived from the Greek word meaning "to waste away", the Latin equivalent of which is consumption, since a wasting away of the flesh is a sign of the late stages of this affliction. Tuberculosis comes from a Latin word meaning, a little lump, because when the disease is well established we can find little masses or tumors of damaged and no longer living tissue crowded with millions of living *bacilli*.