

Protonuclein: Leucocytes and Nuclein.*

BY THOS. O. SUMMERS, M.A., M.D., F.R.S.C., LONDON, ETC.

I BELIEVE that St. Luke was the only physician upon the Apostolic Board, and that he is the generally accredited author of "The Acts of the Apostles," in which, describing the visit of St. Paul to Athens, he declares parenthetically this very remarkable historic note:

"For all the Athenians and the strangers that were there, spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing."

And this *neophilism* which the great Apostle of the Gentiles has given as an historic character to the "City of the Voilet Crown," has descended unto us of later days, and it may be said with truth, that among all the workers in the great field of science, medical men are most eager for discovery and most earnest in the search for the ever unfolding mysteries of truth. And notwithstanding the fact that this spirit of investigation has often been held up to us by those who profit by our labors, and yet are ever ready to sneer at our methods, as the "opprobrium medicorum," it will be a sad day in the history of medicine when we care not to "hear or to tell some new thing."

It is to a new departure in therapy, developed by recent investigation, that I direct your attention in this paper. There is nothing which has so distinctly characterized the trend of modern therapeutics, and separated it from the empirical methods of the past—which have crowned our materia medica with vast masses of useless rubbish, as the contribution of physiological products to the control of disease. It is strange that we have moved so long in the light of physiological discovery thrown upon us by the microscope, the spectroscope, and the ingenious apparatus which makes our laboratories more wonderful to the untutored mind than were ever the alembics of alchemy to any age of romance and superstition—it is passing strange, I say, that we have so long overlooked the very principles upon which alone a scientific system of therapeutics could ever be established—the functional relations of the cellular elements of the organism. As long ago as that stormy time in the history of the British Association, when the Thompson-Tyndall prayer-test was convulsing the religious and scientific world, a no less interesting discussion grew of that contest upon the subject of spontaneous generation. So strong was the antagonism developed that it affected even the terminology of physiology, Dr. Lionel S. Beale, the recognized champion of the "orthodox"

*A paper read before the Section on Practice at the Forty-sixth Annual Meeting of the American Medical Association, held at Baltimore, May 7th to 10th, illustrated upon the screen, showing microphotographs of protonuclein and its action upon the leucocytes of the blood.