

prejudiced that consumption is a disease communicable from one person to another—or that it is, in short, infectious, at least in a degree. Notwithstanding it all, however, and a great deal more, there are some doubtful ones who allow their doubts to be strengthened by negative evidence. The “Brompton Consumption Hospital” (London, Eng.) in particular is referred to as giving evidence of this sort against the contagion view. There, for many years, 200 beds have been constantly occupied by consumptive patients in various stages of the disease, and very few of the nurses or attendants have suffered from it. The fact is, such persons usually appear to be so constituted and habituated as to be particularly exempt from all infectious diseases. They know best how to preserve their general health and vigor. In the hospital doubtless the strictest hygienic rules are observed, as in regard to cleanliness, ventilation, disinfection etc. Evidence of this negative kind reminds one of the Hibernian who, when accused of stealing a pig, strongly protested his innocence in face of the evidence of three men who saw him steal the pig; and said he could bring “six men who didn’t see” him steal it.

Every person does not “take” measles; many escape scarlet fever; and only a comparatively few suffer from typhoid fever. Of this fever, Prof. Liebermeister writes: “Physicians and nurses, who take care of such patients, are no more frequently attacked with the disease than are persons who have never seen such cases. Up to the year 1865, I have never seen in the hospitals which I visited (Griefswald, Berlin, Tübingen) a single hospital patient, physician, or nurse attacked with typhoid fever, although such cases are placed in the general wards. Other observers have had the same experience. According to Murchison, during a period of fourteen and a half years in the London Fever Hospital,

2,506 patients with typhoid fever were treated, and, during that time, only eight cases originated in the hospital.”

Although until recently many believed that typhoid fever might be brought on by overwork, anxiety and other debilitating causes, the belief is now almost universal that nothing will give rise to it without the specific germs of the disease, which must have first entered the body, and that, hence, it is infectious.

Why it is that some diseases are much more infectious than others we cannot exactly explain; though a greater degree of vitality in some specific germs than in others would help to account for the difference. And, “why it is that susceptibility to the different contagious diseases differs in different persons no one has yet arisen to explain satisfactorily, but the fact still remains unquestioned. Measles, small-pox without vaccination, and whooping-cough claim as victims almost everybody; while, on the other hand, scarlet fever, less exorbitant in its demands, is satisfied with perhaps half as much. Hydrophobia lays its iron grasp, according to some authorities, on only five per cent of those bitten by the rabid animal, and even those authorities who go to the other extreme do not claim more than fifty-five per cent. These diseases are indisputably contagious. Why this difference? We cloak our ignorance by saying that the susceptibility varies, which is merely another method of stating the fact that the poison finds food for its sustenance in one case which it is unable to obtain in another. An analogy we find in botany and agriculture. Some plants thrive on one soil, but refuse to grow on another.”

*(To be continued.)*

BILLINGS says that “a very large part of the unpleasantness of this world is due to people who are not fond of social dinners.”