

SEPTIC FEVER IN CAGE BIRDS.

Continued.

Tuberculosis in cage birds is a very rare disease. I have examined hundreds of dead birds microscopically, and have never met with a case yet. I do not say that it never occurs; tuberculosis is a very wide-spread malady; it has been observed by Koch in fowls, and it would be strange if cage birds were exempt, though they are not exposed to the contagion like poultry, which feed on dung heaps, and pick up all sorts of refuse, but I have neither met with a case myself, nor known of one demonstrated by any competent observer, and it is certainly very rare. On the other hand, septic fever is one of the commonest of disorders, and if you see a bird with nodules in the spleen, the chances are all Lombard Street to a China orange—in fact a practical certainty, that it is a case of septic fever. Now, as I will presently show you, the diseases are distinct. There is no resemblance between the organism of septic fever and the tubercle bacillus. No one who is acquainted with the subject and will take the trouble to make a microscopic examination, can confound the one with the other, and, consequently, whenever a man calls a case of septic fever, tuberculosis, it shows that he neither knows what tuberculosis is, nor what septic fever is, or else, that he has not taken the trouble to devote half-an-hour to a microscopical examination, and thinks, so long as he gives the malady a name, it does not matter whether it is right or wrong. But I need hardly tell you that this is worse than trifling. That the first steps towards the rational treatment or prevention of a disease, is to know what it is, and it is not creditable for so called experts, who are either too ignorant to recognise well-known diseases when

they see them, or too lazy to look for them, to go on year after year taking money to give people misleading information.

My purpose to-night is to explain to you shortly, but I hope clearly, the nature of septic fever, to show you how it originates, and it spreads, and if I succeed in this endeavour, you will have no difficulty in seeing for yourselves, how to deal with the disease in a rational and successful manner.

In describing a technical subject to those who have never made any special study of it, there is naturally some difficulty in deciding how much knowledge one may take for granted, and if I assume too much and fail to make my meaning clear, I shall be glad to answer any question at the end of the lecture; and I must ask your indulgence if I err in the other direction and weary you with details which I might have omitted with advantage.

Septic fever, or septicæmia of birds is a parasitic disease produced by a microphyte. It was described in 1878 by Koch in Germany, and subsequently by Klein, Dowdeswell, myself, and others in this country. We are familiar now with bacilli, and bacteria, and their connection with various diseases, but I think I shall make what follows clearer, by a few prefatory remarks on the nature of micro-organism generally, and the part they play in the production of diseases.

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