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INFECTION AND DISINFECTION.

In the twelfth annual report of the Local Government Board (Great Brit), recently issued, Dr. Burdon Sanderson gives a "memorandum of lines of research concerning infection and disinfection", which is of much interest. Dr. Sanderson is undoubtedly one of the ablest physiologists of the present day, and had the advantage of acquiring much practical professional knowledge as a physician; so that lines of research indicated by him cannot be regarded as theoretical or speculative.

In referring to the memorandum, the Glasgow Sanitary Journal says: "As infection begins at the body of the patient, disinfection, in order that it may be effectual, must also begin there. To leave a patient and all his surroundings untouched, in so far as disinfection is concerned, until the termination of his illness; and then to *commence* the process of disinfecting clothing, bedding, and the house, is a comparatively futile proceeding. But Dr. Sanderson carries us back a step further, and indicates lines of research regarding disinfection, *within the body of the patient*, at the commencement of illness. At this point, curative and preventive medicine meet and occupy common ground; and there can be no doubt that, in this direction, the important lines of future research lie. From what we already know of the nature and origin of the communicable diseases, we are justified in concluding that curative treatment, like effective disinfection, must

be antidotal and destructive; for there can be no cure, and no disinfection, apart from the destruction of the specific organisms which give rise to the disease. We have no doubt that important discoveries are in the future, and that the time will come when it may be possible to treat, with scientific precision, the acute and chronic infective diseases, which can only be treated in a palliative manner at the present day.

"The great difficulty, however, must for long consist in the fact that the commencement of the period of invasion, or of incubation, as it is called, is indefinite. Thus, we cannot state, definitely, that a child suffers from measles, scarlet fever, or any other infective disease, until the characteristic symptom, viz., the rash, appears; so that, before the patient can be put under treatment, of a specific nature, the disease is fully developed. If we could declare, or even hope to be able to declare, that a patient was suffering from a disease at the precise period at which the disease was contracted, then we might be able to administer antidotal or disinfectant remedies at once, and thus arrest the progress of the disease; but this we cannot do, and we cannot indulge the hope that we will ever be able to do so. It would, however, be a matter of great importance if remedies were available which would tend to arrest the progress of an infective disease, even after the disease had fully declared itself by its characteristic symptoms; and discoveries of this kind are certainly within the range of *practical medicine*.