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ON THE ORIGIN OF CONTAGIOUS DISEASES.

The doctrine of a contagium vivium—or the germ theory, as affording the simplest explanation as to the origin, communicability, &c., of contagious diseases seems to be very generally accepted. A sort of vague idea that these diseases are produced by minute living organisms has prevailed from a remote period; but since the experiments of Pasteur on fermentation and putrefaction, and since the discovery, more recently, of organisms in the blood and tissues, it has assumed the position of an important pathological doctrine—a theory, or even something more. In October last, at a meeting of the Sanitary Institute of Great Britain, Dr. W. B. Richardson, who a year or two ago graphically delineated a model City of Health, delivered an address on the “Glandular origin of communicable disease.” Ten years ago he advanced the same theory, but it seems not to have been generally accepted. He entirely disbelieves in the germ theory; will not allow that it deserves to be called a theory. He holds, it seems, (*Medical Times and Gazette*) ‘that a patient suffering from communicable disease is for the time being a poison-producing animal; the substance or material by which each communicable disease is produced, and spread, being an organic poison, or septine, which is the result of disturbed glandular action, and the patient being temporarily in a condition analogous to that of a poisonous or venom-producing snake. He has noted that the number of the distinctly communicable diseases is closely related with the number of the secretions in the healthy body: ‘the poison of hydrophobia is from the salivary secretion; of diphtheria from the mucous glands of the throat; of scarlet fever, he believed, from the lymphatic glandular secretion; of glanders, from the mucous secretion of the nasal surface; of typhoid, from mucous glands of the intestinal surface; and so on. In some instances the blood itself is infected, and the corpuscular matter becomes the seat of the cataly-