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DEMONSTRATION OF THE TRACHOMA BODIES.

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From time immemorial, trachoma has existed in Europe as an endemic disease (Fuchs). When the armies came in contact with each other or with the civil population, the disease occurred in epidemics and became widely disseminated. Its contagiousness, placed beyond doubt by the positive inoculations in blind eyes, has been well understood for years, but the cause of this dread disease has, up to the present, remained a mystery, not from want of searching, because during the last fifteen years research in this department of ophthalmology has been most active.

From time to time, numerous micro-organisms have been put forward as the cause of trachoma, without definite proof, until workers in this subject had become convinced that without newer methods, the cause would not be found.

It remained for Halberstedter and Prowazek to make the first great advance in our knowledge of trachoma. These men while working in Java on syphilis found in the epithelial cells in cases of trachoma inclusions which were constantly present. In many of the cells these granules coalesced and formed bodies which covered the nucleus like a cap. Prowazek believed them parasitic and called them chlamydozoa. They inoculated orang-outangs and presumed contagiousness from the appearance of follicles in the epithelium. This report was published in 1907, and since that time their findings have been corroborated by several workers. Sceptics were not wanting, however, and many said that they had seen similar bodies in other forms of conjunctivitis. It was difficult at first, without good photographs, to know just what Halberstedter and Prowazek described as the trachoma bodies, especially as they noted dark blue spots close to the nucleus, the plastin clots of Prowazek, who believed they represented the reaction of the cell to the intruding microbe. It is possible that these plastin clots have been confused with the real trachoma bodies.

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