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EPIDEMIC CEREBRO-SPINAL MENINGITIS.

During the past few months another epidemic of this disease has made its appearance, and numerous cases have been reported from Philadelphia, Washington, and St. Louis. From our exchanges, we note that instances of the disease have occurred in Toronto and its vicinity, and during the past few weeks several undoubted cases have applied for treatment in the Royal Victoria and Montreal General Hospitals. The disease presents many points of interest both to the physician and to the pathologist. Although regarded as endemic in many of the larger cities of America, Councilman cautions us against accepting as instances of the disease, sporadic cases in which the diagnosis was made from the clinical history only. Although in going over the clinical histories of numerous cases one receives an impression of the epidemic form which differs somewhat from the pneumococcus form and the streptococcus form, yet the clinical history alone is not conclusive. Autopsy accounts are only conclusive when accompanied by a careful bacteriological or histological investigation. In the reports it may generally be assumed that the recoveries were from the epidemic form. So far he has not been able to find a case of undoubted pneumococcus meningitis which has recovered; neither has he noted any recoveries from cases of meningitis secondary to thrombosis of the lateral sinuses, or disease of the middle ear. As far as can be ascertained from the records of the Boston City Hospital for the 5 years previous to the epidemic of 1896, no cases of meningitis due to the diplococcus intracellularis occurred within this period. The relation of sporadic cases to the epidemic form is one of much importance, and can only be determined by a careful bacteriological examination in all cases of meningitis of the cerebro-spinal fluid obtained by lumbar puncture. Little is to be learned from mortality tables as to the occurrence of this disease, as many cases are reported as epidemic meningitis which are not so; while in all probability true cases often fail to be recognised.