

The Curability of Tuberculosis

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TUBERCULOSIS is both communicable and preventable. Let it be known equally well that it is also curable. Of this there is an abundance of adequate proof, and yet it is not easy to present in a concise form the grounds upon which is based this now almost universally accepted belief. Formerly tuberculosis was thought to be an absolutely incurable disease. Some there are still who are firmly of that opinion. Others again, while admitting the possibility of a more or less temporary improvement, do not believe that anything like an absolute cure is ever possible.

It is true that the proportion of absolute cures obtained is not as yet large, and that much depends on the progress made by the disease before the patient is subjected to treatment. For, as in any other disease, it would be unreasonable to expect as good results from cases which are advanced as from cases which are but in the early stages. These considerations, however, are only such as would be taken into account in the case of any other disease. The proofs available are of different kinds and come from various sources.

The most distinguished pathologists in the world have made known the conditions found at many of their autopsies. Observations have been made by them in cases in which tuberculosis has been the cause of death, and in cases in which death has been brought about by some other disease or condition. In the latter cases, in which tuberculosis was never thought of as a cause of death, healed tubercular lesions have been found in the lungs. This did not happen in one or two isolated cases in which it might have been possible to suspect some misconception or mistake in observation, but forty to fifty per cent of such cases were found to have had at some time tuberculosis, and, as demonstrated beyond doubt after death, the disease had been cured. Other cases, moreover, in which tuberculosis was known to have been an active disease some years before death, but in which death had been caused by some other disease or condition after the tuberculosis had been apparently cured, were examined in like manner. In these also healed lesions were found in the lungs. Such proofs as these furnished by post-mortem examination are most convincing, although when Brehmer attempted to apply such post-mortem findings to practice, and to accomplish similar artificial cures by treatment, he met with considerable opposition.

Equally convincing, however, are proofs of a different nature which are also available. The results published from

time to time by the different sanatoria cannot but be accepted as fairly reliable data. Such institutions are as a rule in charge of men who are specialists in their particular line, and in the cases quoted in their statistics, the disease had been recognised beyond the shadow of a doubt. This is a very important point to make because it is a common habit of those who are inclined to be sceptical to say, when instances of cures are quoted, "oh, they never had it." As a matter of fact, the rule is for the case to be diagnosed by the family physician or a consultant before the patient enters the sanatorium at all. And furthermore, if there could be any such chance of error, the results would not be, as they are, accepted by the most progressive medical men of the day.

It is quite impossible to give summaries of statistics from any but a few of the numerous sanatoria now in existence. Similar results are, however, being obtained everywhere and the statistics of one institution do not vary very materially from those of another.

Dr. Brehmer, one of the pioneers of the open air treatment, established his sanatorium in Goerbersdorf in 1859. This institution has now 250 beds, and as the result of investigation in over 5000 cases, Dr. Brehmer gives the following statistics as to the number that have been cured:—

Incipient Cases (early)	59% cured
Moderately Adv. Cases	21% "
Far Advanced Cases	3% "

The German Imperial Health Office analyzes the results of treatment in 6,273 cases treated in sanatoria in the years 1899 and 1900 with the following results: In the opinion of the sanatorium physicians 87.7 per cent. were cured or improved, of whom 67.3 per cent. were regarded as sufficiently well to resume work at their former occupation.

Dr. Burton Fanning reports on 716 cases collected from various sanatoria in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Quiescence of the disease or relative recovery was obtained in 37.4 per cent. of cases; amelioration in 40.2 per cent.; no improvement in 22.3 per cent., and this in spite of the fact that only 52 of those cases or 7.4 per cent. could be described as "cases of slight lung mischief."

The second annual report of the Henry Phipps Institute for the Study, Treatment and Prevention of Tuberculosis, in Philadelphia, shows that of 2,344 cases treated in two years, there were 9 cases of disease arrested, 810 improved, 768 unimproved, 528 cases in which results were not recorded, and 229 dead. These cases were, as the