

Selected Articles.

THE DOMINANCE OF ETIOLOGY IN MODERN MEDICINE*

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INFECTION AND IMMUNITY.

Medical treatment of the infectious processes is relatively disappointing, mainly because we do not enjoy the incomparable advantage which presents itself to surgery, of dealing with the infection in advance of its action, by employing aseptic measures to prevent the contact of it with the blood and tissues. In a number of instances—unhappily too few—successful resistance can be offered to intruding micro-organisms and to their toxic products. An antibody or an antiproduet may be introduced into the blood, or developed in it, in time to establish immunity.

In the causation of acute disease there are three factors to be reckoned with. First, there is the cause which we call essential, the specific infection, an extrinsic influence, the element without which in the particular instance, and in every other instance, the disease would not have occurred. Secondly, there is the patient's resistance to the specific infection, an intrinsic element. Thirdly, there may be incidental or concomital circumstances or associations which are not essential, because not present in every instance of the disease, but which, by occurring incidentally in particular instances, either favor the essential influence directly in its invasion of the body, or, on the other hand, lower resistance, and thus indirectly contribute to the production of the disease.

INCIDENTAL CIRCUMSTANCES IN CAUSATION.

It is of this third element of etiology that I desire to speak to-day, with respect more particularly to its nature and forms, and with respect to the opportunities that it affords the practitioner, not only to forecast, prevent, treat or otherwise control disease, but to take part in the advance of medical science.

These concomitant circumstances are of great variety, both in kind and in the manner of their incidence on the body. The

*Extracts from the address on Medicine delivered before the British Medical Association.