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IMMUNITY AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE.

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It is scarcely four-score years since a suspicion of the bacterial causation of disease dawned on medical investigators. To-day the science of Bacteriology has already made a brilliant progress, and, because of this advance of knowledge, we conclude that there is a great deal more to come which is as yet unrevealed. But with this enlightenment has also come an improvement in the methods of healing. These improved methods of healing include not only the restoring to the normal of nature that has gone astray, as it were, but—what is of equal, if not of greater importance—the anticipation, or prevention, of nature's subsequent deviation from the path of normality. Up to the time that bacterial existence was surmised medical treatment, especially in the various infections, was almost purely empirical. As the study of germs progressed the causes of the various contagious and infectious diseases were gradually unearthed.

Lord Lister was the first to discover the bacterial causation of infection through wounds. This was really the starting-point of the true study and application of prevention in the infections. And thus the discovery of the exciting, or microbic, cause of disease supplied the missing link to what is our present system of Rational Medicine.

Now, the main aim of Medicine, as a science, is the alleviation of pain, the elimination of sufferings, and the curing of diseases. But, wherever possible, it should also be the purpose of medical study to prevent the setting in of such diseases, the subsequent sufferings, and the accompanying pain. The cure of smallpox is now possible. But the prevention of the disease is also possible, and, indeed, practised. Cancer—the dreaded *opprobrium medicorum*—is as much as possible, cured. It is cured empirically, and always by means of the knife. But the preventive cure is unknown. Why? Why is it that small-pox or