

there are other conditions that govern the propagation of the disease. Some of these we know to be the age of the individual, and the condition of his mucous membranes in the upper air passages, probably in sanitary surroundings, the season of the year, etc. Hence these latter considerations should not be overlooked, even assuming that the disease is (as it may be) wholly contagious.

There appears to be a diversity of opinion as to whether practicing physicians should make cultures, or inoculate animals for the purpose of diagnosis. In this connection I shall quote from Dr. Theobald Smith, of the Bureau of Animal Industry, Washington, D. C. He writes me as follows :

"I think that no practicing physician should attempt the diagnosis. Bacteriology is too complex a subject now. The difficulty would be, not so much in recognizing the bacilli in an acute recent case, as in recognizing and differentiating the many other forms likely to appear in the cultures. . . ."

"The difficulties in differentiating species is becoming greater with every new one described, and any one who has spent much time with any group of bacteria knows of many gradations and variations which are likely to confuse the novice or the occasional microscopist."

Dr. Smith's views are those held by the majority of those most competent to give opinions in the matter, and they maintain that Boards of Health should not attempt to make such experiments compulsory on physicians. They maintain that work of this kind should always, if practicable, be done at some bacteriological centre, and then it should be revised by an experienced bacteriologist, if it is to have any practical value. And it is felt that the difficulties of establishing these centres are not unsurmountable.

Certainly both humanity and science call upon us to favor such researches to the full extent of our power as physicians. Still if we are to have the best results in the shortest time, we should endeavor to see that the material falls only into competent hands.

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CIMICIFUGA IN MENTAL DEPRESSION.—Dr. G. W. Durga, *Med. Bull.*, says black cohosh is very valuable in symptoms of mental depression occurring in subjects with uterine disorder.

## NEURASTHENIA.

BY PROF. G. RAUZIER, OF MONTPELLIER.

Translated from the French, by D. Campbell Meyers, M.D., Toronto.

Neurasthenia is a common disease ; according to Blocq, one neurasthenic is seen in every twelve patients in the consultation hall of the Salpêtrière. This proportion seems to us too small, and in a provincial centre relatively quiet we certainly see a much greater number. Neurasthenia, of which traces are found in all ages, appears at the present day with much greater intensity than formerly, owing to our method of living, and to the fierce *struggle for life* of the nineteenth century. This will be the reigning disease of this *fin de siècle*, and it is impossible to foresee what it may reserve for the coming century.

We must, however, guard against exaggerations, and not find neurasthenia everywhere ; one might easily mistake in this way for a neurosis, all the good or bad actions of life which had been insufficiently considered ; "every individual," it has been humorously said, "who takes wife or tobacco, who is charitable or passionate, is a neurasthenic."

Neurasthenia is met with at all periods of life ; it is most frequent in the adult, and is rarely seen in the child. The two sexes pay to it an equal tribute. It is recruited from all classes of society, but affects, perhaps, with greater predilection, the upper classes ; the liberal professions furnishing the most notable contingent to it.

Neurasthenia may be defined as the result of nervous exhaustion, all causes capable of depressing the nervous system can be recognized in its origin. The essential condition of its development is excessive fatigue, regarded in its different aspects and various forms. The elementary cause, so to speak, of neurasthenia, says Mathieu, is *over-pressure of the nervous system*, over-pressure with its two fundamental elements—excess of work or excitement, insufficiency of rest and of recuperation. "All the causes of neurasthenia," says Prof. Grasset, "may be traced to excessive fatigue in all its forms, that (alone) is the key to the problem."

Such, for instance, excessive application to study. That is a broad question, very much discussed, at present. Some wish to show it every-