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MODERN DIFFICULTIES IN BACTERIOLOGICAL
DIAGNOSIS.*

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At a time when in the popular estimation bacteriology is showing itself to be of greater and ever greater import not only in matters of health and disease, but also in the very commonest commercial relations of every-day life, and when the world in general seems to be becoming rapidly convinced that the microbe is at the bottom of everything; when, in fact, bacteriology has already made an ample apology for its existence, it is, I think, well that occasionally one of us, not from a sceptical spirit, but because of the very strength of his belief in the importance of his science, more especially in its relationship to public health, should pause, and should, as a bacteriologist, point out that matters are not quite so settled, that in fact everything is not quite so surely established as in the opinion of very many it would seem to be.

Taking into account the extraordinarily large accumulation of facts that we now have concerning the bacteria, it is wonderful to think that to all intents and purposes the advance of bacteriology has been synchronous with the

* A communication presented to the Montreal meeting of the American Public Health Association, September, 1894.