

THE PATHOLOGY AND PREVENTION OF INFLUENZA

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The Pathology and prevention of influenza by Julius Althaus

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JULIUS ALTHAUS

**THE PATHOLOGY
AND PREVENTION
OF INFLUENZA**

S. T. Armstrong
New York, 1892

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THIS little book is an amplification of a paper on the Pathology of Influenza, which I read before the Medical Society of London, on November 2nd, 1891, and which appeared in the *Lancet* for November 14th and 21st, 1891.

48, HARLEY STREET,
November, 1891.

THE PATHOLOGY AND PREVENTION OF INFLUENZA.

I PURPOSE to show in this paper that the symptoms of influenza are owing to the action in the system of a special poison secreted by a pathogenous bacillus ; that this poison has a special affinity to a definite centre of the nervous system, which is irritated and depressed by it ; that an antidote which is able to neutralise the effects of the poison is formed in the blood of the patient, and tends to effect a spontaneous cure of the disease ; and that the nearest approach to this antidote which we at present possess appears to be animal vaccine-lymph, which should therefore be used as a preventive of influenza, in case another epidemic of that distemper should break out in the country.

The word "influenza" being somewhat long and, as it seems to me, not very happily chosen, I have in the present paper frequently used the term "grip," by which the disease is known in Germany and France, but spelt as an English word, as synonymous with influenza. I

hope that this innovation may be generally accepted, not only because the term is short, but also because it graphically denotes the suddenness with which the disease attacks the patient. I remember having had grip as a boy, during the epidemic of 1849, and can well recall the utterly unexpected and rapid manner in which I was seized with fever and dreadful pain in the head and the body, having felt quite well only an hour before. Another reason for accepting the term "grip" as equivalent to influenza is, that it is really impossible to speak of the "influence of influenza," as one often feels tempted to do when talking or writing about it, while the "influence of grip" may pass muster anywhere.

There can be no doubt that the epidemics of grip of the years 1889-91 have been the most interesting medical event of late years, and that they have taught us a great many lessons which we did not know before. Indeed, the disease not having appeared in England in an epidemic, or, rather, pandemic form for many years past, was unfamiliar to the present generation of practitioners; more especially as in numerous cases the signs of catarrh of the respiratory organs, commonly called "influenza cold," and which were generally believed to be characteristic of the complaint, were either slight or

completely absent, the most striking symptoms of the distemper having been in the majority of cases a sharp and short attack of fever, great physical and mental prostration, and severe pain in the head, body, and limbs, most or all of these symptoms ceasing as suddenly as they had appeared.

In accordance with our present views as to the mode in which infection takes place, I look upon the symptoms of influenza as due to the action in the system of a special toxine, secreted by a pathogenous bacillus. I regret to say that the results of numerous and laborious researches made by competent observers on the bacteria of grip flatly contradict each other, and that nothing definite is as yet known about the morphology of that micro-organism, nor about the chemical constitution of its poisonous secretion. Neither Weichselbaum's lancet-shaped diplococcus, nor Klebs's flagellated monads, nor Vaillard and Vincent's streptococcus, nor Kirchner and Seifert's punctiform microbes, have stood the test of criticism; and it seems probable that different modes of investigation will have to be invented before the real culprit can be discovered. All I feel it prudent to advance with regard to these points at present is, that the life-duration of the bacillus seems to be in the