

ART. XXXVIII.—*Spirillum Fever: Synonyms: Famine or Relapsing Fever*, as seen in Western India by H. VANDYKE CARTER, M.D. Lond., Surgeon-Major I. M. D., etc. London: J. & A. Churchill, 1882, pp. 449.

DR. CARTER is already well known for his researches in various recondite medical subjects. The work issued under the above designation, gives an account of that curious malady—relapsing fever—which is apparently produced by a parasite in the blood—the spirillum. This consists of a “colourless, slender, twisted filament actively moving in the liquid plasma until coagulation begins.” It is not found in any other fluid or tissue of the organism, and its presence in the blood excites the febrile paroxysm; its disappearance marks the interfebrile or intermission stage; its redevelopment is coincident with the relapsing stage.

The spirillum is a vegetable parasite belonging to the *Algæ* class, and is included in a subsection called *Bacteria* which form with *bacillus* a nematogenous group. Dr. Obermeier is the original discoverer of the presence of spirillum in the blood in cases of relapsing fever.

Dr. Carter's valuable researches prove that relapsing fever is the same disease in Bombay as in Europe and, probably, in America. His specimens, examined by Koch and Cohn and Albrecht, were found to be identical with those of European countries. The disease although known as “famine fever,” only finds in the low condition of the vital forces, a suitable nidus for the reception and development of the infecting organism. Famine does not produce the disease; famine merely favours its spread. According to Dr. Carter, relapsing fever “spreads solely through means of actual contact with the sick.” It appears also that the contagion is active both before and after the febrile manifestations. It is very remarkable that no immunity against future attacks is conferred by a seizure, no matter how severe it may have been. The mechanics of the contagion—so to speak—remain obscure. It is not known by what channel the *materies morbi* is conveyed. So direct a medium of communication as between the nursing mother and the child has not seemed to affect the propagation of the germ. Crowding together of people seems to be the most important agency for inducing contagion. There is, it is certain, some means of propagating the spirillum, which remains to be discovered.

The existence of this parasite and the development of a specific fever from it is one of the most important facts in modern parasitic pathology. The work of Dr. Carter is an important contribution to the subject, and we commend its study to those interested in the subject.

R. B.