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PASTEUR'S APPLICATION OF HIS METHODS TO THE PREVENTION OF DISEASES (1865-95)

EXHIBITS BY THE WELLCOME HISTORICAL MEDICAL MUSEUM.

PASTEUR'S APPLICATION OF HIS METHODS TO THE PREVENTION OF DISEASES

Pasteur followed up his work on fermentation, spontaneous generation, and the discovery of acids and bases by an attack on the causes and prevention of various diseases. His first work in this direction was on the question of silkworms - pébrine and flaccidity. This followed studies on anthrax, septicaemia, cholera, typhoid, carbuncle, and finally rabies.

He sought, found and isolated the micro-organisms causing the disease under investigation. He showed suitable media on which to grow the micro-organisms and subjected them to detailed study. He studied the effect of successive cultures both in the body and in artificial media. He found methods by which the virulence of the disease germs could be diminished and so make preventive inoculation possible. The micro-organisms of rabies, diphtheria, cholera, etc., from his previous experience became able to prepare a vaccine.

Pasteur explained for some time the idea that infectious diseases arise spontaneously. He showed how infection might be prevented by exclusion of germs, and how, if germs could not be excluded, prophylactic vaccination ensured safety.

