

SCIENCE

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THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE OPSONINS AND OTHER ANTIBODIES¹

LOOKING back, we find that only fifty years ago the conception of the nature of the processes that run their courses in the animal body in infectious diseases, generally speaking, were hazy and still often even mystical. Preceded by occasional brilliant anticipations, notably by Bretonneau in regard to the specifiveness of infectious processes and by Henle with respect to the interaction between parasite and host, the tireless, unmeasurably fruitful investigation of the modern era, introduced by Pasteur and Koch, has brought to light not only the actual causes of many infectious diseases, but a great deal also in regard to the means and reactions in the infected body whereby they are overcome. Of these defensive processes phagocytosis and the action and formation of that remarkable group of bodies known as antibodies have received and still receive the greatest amount of attention. Indeed, the discovery of the wonderful power of the animal organism to respond to the effects of certain substances by the production of new antibodies must be reckoned as one of the great events, not only in medicine, but in general biology. We feel best acquainted with the antitoxins, the lysins, the agglutinins, the precipitins and the opsonins, but this does not exhaust the list, which is a growing one. The estab-

¹ Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section K—Physiology and Experimental Medicine, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Baltimore, 1908.