THE PATHOGENICITY OF NEISSERIA SICCA

NEISSERIA SICCA is a small gram-negative, aerobic diplococcus. Its growth on agar consists of irregularly round, raised, opaque, slightly yellowish colonies which may reach a diameter of 3 mm. The colonies are dull, dry, with a deeply furrowed surface and a crenated edge. Attempts to remove these colonies show them to be very firm and some of them adherent to the surface of the medium. The removed colony is found to be difficult to disintegrate, and impossible to emulsify. When grown in a liquid medium the organism agglutinates spontaneously. Most of the writers on the subject state that acid, but no gas, is produced from dextrose, maltose, levulose and saccharose. The action on saccharose was delayed in the organism which I studied. Besides the rough type of colony described above, a smooth type has been noticed. Variants of a smooth type were observed in my cultures.

As to the specificity of *N. sicca* and other members of the genus Neisseria found in the nasopharynx, Wilson[1] states:

> It seems probable that the gram-negative cocci of the nasopharynx form a single species within which are a few more or less constant subspecies, each of which is itself subject to variation. Until we know more of the extent of this variation it does not seem justifiable to assign names to the numerous types that have from time to time been described by different investigators.

But this is a controversial point.

Under the title, "Acute vegetative endocarditis with multiple secondary foci of involvement due to M. Pharynitides siccae," Schultz[2] described a case of clinical endocarditis from the blood of which a pure culture of a gram-negative diplococcus was grown. This organism was not agglutinated by polyvalant antimeningococcus serum. Acid, but no gas, was produced from dextrose, saccharose and maltose; there was no reaction in mannite or litmus milk.

Kretschmer and Hufnagel[3] isolated a similar organism from the pus of a kidney at operation.

Recently, I identified *N. sicca* from the blood stream of a boy, 12 years of age, who had been ill with clinical endocarditis for two weeks. He complained of headache; a petechial rash extended over the abdomen, and valvular disease of the heart was present. *N. sicca* was isolated on three occasions from the blood stream. Several cultures made of the spinal fluid proved negative.

Detection of the growth of *N. sicca* in the blood culture made in liquid medium may be readily overlooked, due to the adherence of the organisms to each other, and to its not forming a diffused growth.

Neisseria sicca appears to be a pathogen and more of a clinical entity than we have suspected.

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[1] Wilson, *J. Path. and Bact.*, 31, 477, 1928.
[2] Schultz, *J. A. M. A.*, 71, 1739, 1918.
[3] Kretschmer and Hufnagel, *J. A. M. A.*, 82, 1850, 1924.

CHROMOSOME NUMBERS IN ALTHEA ROSEA

BECAUSE of its economic importance, cotton has been the subject of much cytological investigation. Denham, in 1924, compared the chromosome numbers of the New World and Egyptian cottons with those of the Asiatic varieties. He reports the haploid number of the former as 26 and that of the latter as 13. The chromosome numbers of the other genera of the family have not been reported so far as known.

Flower buds of *Althea rosea* were collected during the summer of 1931 and fixed in various solutions. Chromosomes were counted in both homeotypic and heterotypic divisions and it appears that the haploid number of the species is 13.

Further study of the different genera is planned together with a more detailed cytological work.

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ON "ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN SPAIN"

IN SCIENCE for April 15, Father P. H. Yancey, S.J., suggests a boycott by American educators as a protest against the "brutal attack" on academic freedom perpetrated by the Spanish government in forbidding members of the Jesuit order to teach in Spain, and confiscating their property. Such a statement by an educator and a member of that order deserves notice, since I am unable to understand how academic freedom is directly involved in the issue.

An inclination to comment on this matter is due to my having been born and reared in Spain. I received my education there, graduating from the University of Madrid. I have known rather intimately the conditions which led to the fall of the monarchy, and I have been in touch with the situation in Spain since leaving that country.

The suppression of the Jesuits with the advent of a new order was a foregone conclusion in the minds of both liberal Catholics and dissenters. Certainly, the teaching activities of the members of this order have not been the cause of objection, nor their personal beliefs, which they have been free to express wherever and whenever they chose. The Society of Jesus has been forbidden to carry on its appointed tasks in Spain because its members take, in addition