

study of his skin. He saw through the glass an infinite variety of crawling beasts. The discovery frightened him. He came to the conclusion that he was being devoured by microbes. And his terror increased to such an extent that he became mad, and had to be conveyed to the special infirmary of the lock-up. This is the latest proof of the well-known axiom that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

**THE EMPRESS OF CHINA AND MEDICAL MISSIONS.**—The Dowager-Empress of China has contributed, through the British Minister, 10,000 taels, or £1,450, to the scheme for a college where modern medicine can be taught to students of the London Mission and the American Board of Missions, an unexpected recognition of missionary work that does her honour. The cost of building and equipment is being borne by the London Mission. Students will undergo a five years' training, and, at the end of the course, a diploma will be granted. The training will be regardless of creed, but the bulk of the students will, at first, naturally be Christians. The cost is estimated at £10,000. Sir Ernest Satow himself has given 1,000 taels, or £145. Subscriptions are now being sought from high Chinese officials, who are expected to follow the example of the Empress in assisting the scheme.

**A MEMORIAL HOSPITAL TO QUEEN VICTORIA.**—Johannesburg's permanent memorial to the late Queen Victoria is to take the practical form of a maternity hospital, which is to be erected at an estimated cost of £8,500.

**CHOLERA AT BAGHDAD.**—News has been received from Baghdad that cholera is raging there, a hundred deaths being reported daily.

**A REMEDY FOR SNAKE-BITE.**—It is asserted that cures of snake-bite have been effected in many cases by Mr. R. Doudney, of Batticaloa, Ceylon, whose method is to rub the wound energetically with vinegar.

## Physical Deterioration.

The Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee appointed by the Lord President of the Privy Council "to make a preliminary inquiry into the allegations concerning the deterioration of certain classes of the population as shown by the large percentage of rejections for physical causes of recruits for the Army and by other evidence, especially the report of the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland), and to consider in what manner the medical profession can best be consulted on the subject with a view to the appointment of a Royal Commission, and the terms of reference to such a Commission, if appointed," has now been published in the form of a Blue Book.

The Committee was under the chairmanship of Mr. Almeric Fitzroy, Clerk of the Council, and eventually the original terms of reference were enlarged and the Committee directed "(1) to determine, with the aid of such counsel as the medical profession are able to give, the steps that should be taken to furnish the Government and the nation at large with periodical data for an accurate comparative estimate of the health and physique of the people; (2) to indicate generally the causes of such physical deterioration as does exist in certain classes; and (3) to point out the means by which it can be most effectually diminished."

It is very satisfactory that the Committee, after the examination of sixty-eight witnesses, report "that the

impressions gathered from the great majority of the witnesses examined do not support the belief that there is any general progressive physical deterioration." At the same time, laziness, want of thrift, ignorance of household management, and particularly of the choice and preparation of food, filth, indifference to parental obligations, drunkenness, largely infect adults of both sexes, and press with terrible severity upon their children. The very growth of the family resources, upon which statisticians congratulate themselves, accompanied, as it frequently is, by great unwisdom in their application to raising the standard of comfort, is often productive of the most disastrous consequences. "The people perish for lack of knowledge."

### RECOMMENDATIONS.

The third part of the Report is devoted to a summary of the principal recommendations which the Committee desire to make, and which merit the earnest consideration of all who appreciate the importance of maintaining the standard of national health. Amongst the recommendations are:—

#### *Anthropometric Survey.*

With a view to the collection of definite data bearing upon the physical condition of the population, the Committee think that a permanent Anthropometric Survey should be organised as speedily as possible.

#### *Register of Sickness.*

It appears to the Committee in the highest degree desirable that a Register of Sickness, not confined to infectious diseases, should be established and maintained. For this purpose the official returns of Poor Law medical officers could, with very little trouble and expense, be modified so as to secure a record of all diseases treated by them. And, further, it ought not to be difficult to procure the co-operation of hospitals and other charitable institutions throughout the country, so as to utilise for the same purpose the records of sickness kept by such institutions.

#### *Advisory Council.*

The Committee are emphatic in recommending the creation of an Advisory Council, not only to receive and apply the information derived from the Anthropometric Survey and the Register of Sickness, but also to advise the Government on all legislative and administrative points concerning public health in respect of which State interference might be expedient.

#### *Overcrowding.*

The Committee believe that the time has come for dealing drastically with this problem. They advocate an experimental effort by the local authority in certain of the worst districts, in the direction of fixing a standard and notifying that after a given date no crowding in excess of such standard would be permitted. It is believed that, if the thing were carried through without hesitation or sentimentality, means would be found, through the ordinary channels of supply and demand, or within the sphere of municipal activity, for housing all but the irreclaimably bad.

#### *Register of Owners of Houses.*

It should be the duty of the local authority in all towns above a certain size to establish and maintain an accurate register of owners; this is one of the first desiderata towards dealing with slum property.

#### *Alcoholism.*

The Committee believe that more may be done to check the degeneration resulting from "drink" by bringing home to men and women the fatal effects of alcohol on physical efficiency than by expatiating on the moral wickedness of drinking. To this end they

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)