

## The Plague.

THE two ladies whose portraits we give below left England on March 12th to nurse the plague in Bombay.

The *Indian Medical Record* is publishing an interesting paper on "Bubonic Plague in Bombay," by A. G. Viegas, L.M.S. From it we cull the following interesting facts:—

The plague, as is now commonly known, is due to a definite bacillus. This obtains its entrance into the human body principally in three ways. By respiration, through an external wound, and by the intestinal tract. For the development of the disease in the human system the body must be in a condition to afford a suitable nidus. The bacillus, unless it finds suitable surroundings, either inside or outside the human system, decays and eventually dies.



MISS FLORA COLEMAN.



MISS MARGARET CATHERINE STEEL.

With regard to contagion, Dr. Viegas says that as the disease is caused by a specific bacillus, and since the introduction of that bacillus causes the disease, it is certainly contagious.

The bacilli are contained in the excretions and secretions, the vomits, and the dejecta, of those sick of the disease, therefore every plague-stricken person becomes a centre of infection, and if removed to an unaffected district, the residents in that district may become affected by the bacilli thus voided. The disease need not necessarily travel along drains or sewers. All that is necessary is the removal of the sick, or of those in whom the disease is in the course of incubation, in order to infect a previously healthy locality.

It is possible that dust containing, as it does, bacilli may be an agent for spreading the disease.

Dr. Viegas inclines to the belief that the disease is soil-bred, and soil-supported. For this reason he advocates the thorough disinfection of the excreta of plague-stricken patients, and the cremation of dead rats. He states that each dead rat or mouse which is

not burnt up is a greater danger than the presence of a person sick of the plague, for its body affords food to insects such as ants, birds, &c. The ants and other insects may further spread the disease either by inoculating it, or by their bodies being fed upon by other insects, or by infecting the air. The birds also, that might not be suspected to have died of the disease, will in the same way afford food to others, and also serve as centres of infection.

There are three forms of plague described by the text books. They are:

- (1) Abortive or *larval* plague, or *pestis minor*.
- (2) Grave or severe plague, *pestis major*.
- (3) Fulminant plague, *pestis siderans*.

Dr. Viegas states that he has met with all these forms of plague during the present outbreak.

The appearance of *the face* is described as being a most pathognomonic sign. The expression is like that of a person who has been taking hypnotics for two

or three nights, and yet has had no sleep. It is a singular expression, it is not that of an intoxicated or drunken person, but as nearly as possible of a person who, notwithstanding the use of hypnotics, has not had a wink of sleep for two or three nights. It conveys the impression that the patient is overpowered with overwhelming, and irresistible, and intense sleep, and yet has not slept. Generally the face has a gloomy disheartened expression; sometimes it expresses fear and anxiety, more often apathy and vacancy. This expression is so characteristic of the disease that it is a point of great diagnostic value. The eyes are, in 95 per cent. of cases, red and injected, and sometimes bloodshot. They are a little retracted. The face is generally of a yellow bluish hue. The aspect has not shown the gravity of the cases, even in the fulminant forms of plague, in which the patients have died from within eight to twenty-four hours from the onset of the disease. Even the deep coma does not give the appearance that death is near.

(To be continued.)

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