

The houses are built of mud, with walls two feet thick, and earth floors, and in many cases there is no window at all, the walls are not whitewashed, so when the door is shut the room is absolutely black dark. To get in at the door you must first turn sideways, then stoop lower than you conveniently can, then straddle over a parapet, a foot high and a foot wide, into the room. You find yourself in a small black hole, containing perhaps a woman and three skinny children and all their worldly goods, two or three cooking pots and a heap of rags that do not smell of *eau de Cologne*. When you suggest a window, the woman stretches up her hands to you, and in a volley of the guttural noises that she calls her mother tongue, entreats you not to make holes in her walls. She has three little children in this small room, and if you make holes in it the wind will blow on them, and she can't afford shutters: Certainly the thermometer does go down to 70° every night.

We have now got several Plague hospitals within a radius of a mile round our house. Dr. Thomson and I went to see the first as soon as it was opened. It consists of a number of sheds made entirely of thatch, supported by bamboos; an open space of 18 inches along each side, between the top of the wall and the roof; each shed contains about six beds. The beds are made of wood or bamboo, with webbing for the patient to lie on. The webbing is disinfected after each patient. When a patient dies he is put into a six-foot bath of Condy for five minutes, then taken out and dried up, and taken away at once, the Hindus to be burnt; and the other races, who, one may say, are in the habit of being buried, are covered with quick-lime, and then buried. Each patient in hospital is provided with a blanket and a pillow, and is allowed to have one friend in the shed to nurse him.

I do not think that any more than they have got is needed in the way of either nurses or nursing requisites, so very little can be done for the patients, and each one has a whole friend to look after him; and even she does not do those terribly disgusting things that an English nurse has to do when an accident happens in bed. Those things are done by ward boys; people of the lowest caste of Indians.

When by any chance a patient recovers—and the proportion of these is much larger than it was at first—he finds himself without a rag in the world, the Health Commission has been to his home, his clothes are burnt, his walls are whitewashed, and have windows in them, and his home smells of phenyle. To quote the Bard, "He ties a string around his waist, and lo! he is dressed for the day." He is a pitiable object, and it is in his favour, and that of his nearest

and dearest, that I would ask for subscriptions, if I were collecting at all.

Again, in the Segregation Camp, there are now about 400 people, whose friends have been taken to the hospitals. These too, in nearly every case, have had their clothes and bedding burnt, and are kept in rooms made of matting and thatch for ten days, and then have nothing to return to but a coldly clean, whitewashed and carbolised hovel, with a hole in the wall. My husband and I drove to this camp last evening, and gave away some clothes, blankets, &c., at other people's expense. One old man I saw there—a personal friend of my own—he used to bring his buffalo to my back door, and milk her there—the only way I could ensure having this morning's milk, and not last night's milk—that had shared his hut for twelve hours—and had then been enriched with water out of the nearest puddle. His wife died a few days ago, and he and his son and daughter were taken to the camp. He escaped, but the soldiers called at his house the same evening, and brought him back; he is to remain there for twelve days, instead of ten. From there we drove to Parvati, about a mile out of Poona, where the troops engaged on Plague work are encamped. Very pretty it looks, with the rows of white tents, and the roads and tent boundaries marked out with little whitewashed stones. Then further along rows of carts with disinfectants and whitewash, and brushes, and white flags; other rows of carts with red flags and fuel for the things that will not burn without. These men work from 6.30 to 11 a.m., and from 5 to 7 p.m. every day. That is fairly hard work in the height of the hot weather. The thermometer is over 100° in the shade, most days; and with all their efforts they make little or no impression on the fever. The death-rate remains nearly the same. Dr. Haffkine has been here, and has started our Poona doctors inoculating with his lymph. Crowds of people go to be done, and the lymph is constantly running short. We have had all our servants and their families done, and Dr. Thomson was done himself, as he has to be amongst the people a good deal. A very grave question arises, what shall we do with the patients and their segregated friends if we do not get rid of the Plague before the rain comes, and that is due in just two months? The thatch sheds, that they do very well in now, will be completely washed away with the first burst of the Monsoon; a very strong roof is needed to stand that rain, and that wind, and the Plague is supposed to increase and multiply rapidly in warm, moist atmosphere. The people now, under Government thatch, number nearly 1,000, exclusive of the troops, who of course cannot remain under canvas during the rains. It is a

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)