


Medical Matters.**PLAGUE.**


IN a valuable article in the *Medical Times* it is stated that in India plague is rapidly diminishing; but the abatement is less than the experience of previous epidemics would have led us to expect. This is the fourth epidemic of plague that has devastated Bombay since 1896, and it has lasted longer and claimed more victims than any one of its predecessors. The estimated number of deaths caused by plague in the Bombay Presidency since October, 1899, until the present time, amounts to the enormous number of 50,000, and when it is remembered that in the Bengal Presidency and in other parts of India the disease has prevailed with more or less virulence the mortality caused by plague in India is seen to have been very great. Plague has become endemic in India, and it is time that the Government accepted this fact and legislated accordingly. In all probability, plague will be enumerated amongst the diseases of India for at least ten years to come, and, instead of the rather haphazard legislation which at present obtains, it would be well were rules and regulations on more permanent lines carefully drawn up and enforced. Plague cannot be "stamped out" in native cities by any known method; inoculation at best affords but a temporary immunity; and it would be well to accept these facts and act accordingly. In the cities and districts of India, directions printed in the language and dialect peculiar to them should be posted; not only where plague is incident, but at regular intervals and even at times and in places outside the area stricken for the time being. In this way the native community would be made familiar with what was required of them to do, and the scare which arises by the double terror of segregation and of death from the disease would be mitigated. By measures such as these the native and even the European would come to regard plague as a matter not for hysterical legislation, but as one of the laws of the State to which adherence is a necessity.

At Aden, plague exists as a serious epidemic. In Hong Kong, Macaw, and Southern China generally plague is thoroughly endemic. In Australia, plague has existed at three ports—Sydney, Adelaide and at Brisbane, but only in

the former has it attained a serious hold. A case of plague occurred at Durban recently, but no further infection is recorded. In Egypt, Port Said threatens to become a plague centre; since the outbreak at the port, 48 cases of plague have occurred, and 22 deaths from the disease. Plague has disappeared from Mauritius, Hawaii, and the Paraguayan Republic.

THE COLOUR OF WINDOW BLINDS.

The remarkable and widely varying properties of the elementary colours which compose white light suggest, says Prof. Longro, that the employment of screens, as in the blinds placed over our windows, should be founded on a scientific basis. Our knowledge of the properties of each individual section of the spectrum is not exact, but this much we do know, that the rays of least refrangibility, the red rays, are without direct chemical effects; they occur at the heat end of the spectrum. On the other hand, the rays of the highest refrangibility contain the violet rays which chemically are exceedingly active. It is these rays which are concerned in photography and also in the great processes of vegetable nutrition and growth. The object of blinds is, of course, twofold—to keep a room cool and to screen out some of the light, so as to avoid the bleaching of colouring materials of the carpets and furniture. At the same time sufficient light must be admitted, so that the occupant may see without difficulty. What, then, is the best colour for the purpose? Since light exerts the peculiar action due to the actinic rays which materially and wholesomely affects the air of a dwelling-room, care should obviously be taken not to exclude all the rays that are so concerned. Thus ruby or orange-red material would be contraindicated. Abundance of light is inimical to the life of micro-organisms, so that a material in some shape of a compromise should be selected. The best for this purpose is probably a delicately ochre-coloured fabric. This would screen part of the active light rays, and, if of a fair thickness, the greater part of the heat rays, while admitting sufficient active rays to allow of a wholesome effect upon the room and its surroundings. Venetian blinds do not allow of the graduation, which is desirable, of the tone of light that may be adjusted with cloth fabric. As is well known, exclusively red light has been used as a therapeutic agent, and apparently with encouraging results, in measles.

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