


## Medical Matters.

### THE MILITARY EXPEDITION TO CHINA.



THE Berlin correspondent of the *Lancet* states that the care of the health of the troops embarked for China has been an object of great solicitude to the military authorities, and all the officers have received a small pamphlet containing hygienic rules to be observed on board ship, and in the Far East. The pamphlet is written in a style intelligible to ordinary readers, and the officers have been ordered to give their men instructions in the subjects dealt with in it. This is the more necessary, as the China expedition is the first in which German troops have been engaged on a large scale in a war out of Europe. The troops have been provided with different uniforms for the hot and cold season; the summer uniform consists of khaki and a straw hat, the winter uniform of stout cloth and furs. With a view to prevent scurvy and similar diseases, great quantities of preserved vegetables and anti-scorbutics have been sent to China. Apparatus for the sterilization of drinking water by boiling and by bromine, as suggested by Dr. Schumberg, has also been provided. Army medical officers, specially trained in bacteriological work have been sent with the army, and it will be their duty not only to examine the food and the drinking water, but also to investigate any conditions which might have a significance in connection with an outbreak of disease. The Army Medical Corps is, of course, much more numerous than in an European war, one army medical officer being sent for each 120 men. The special medical staff consists of a bearer company, and of four field hospitals for 200 patients each. For the erection of stationary hospitals 127 tents and 15 barracks have been sent with all the necessary staff and material. Two hospital ships have been chartered from the North German Lloyd for the conveyance of sick and wounded soldiers to Europe.

### PULMONARY DISEASE IN THE NAVY.

Captain Rason, R.N., in a letter to the *Times* calls attention to "a condition of matters with respect to the respiratory organs of the seamen of the fleet, which is most grave and serious." With the introduction of the long service system in 1866, the affections of the heart and

lungs to which seamen were very liable, were gradually diminished, until in 1883 they were half of what they were in 1868. Since 1883, while general cases of illness have decreased, lung troubles have shown a steady upward tendency, indeed, Captain Rason states that—"diseases of respiratory organs have increased nearly one-fourth; that the increase of cases on the home station of disease of respiratory organs has increased 60 per cent., and whilst the invaliding has more than doubled since 1883 from this complaint, the general total of invaliding on home station has considerably decreased."

### DISEASES OF RESPIRATORY ORGANS.

WHOLE NAVY.			HOME STATION.		
	Cases.	Invalided.		Cases.	Invalided
1868	146.9	5.0	1868	139.7	5.1
1883	84.9	1.45	1883	78.2	1.53
1898	103.5	3.79	1898	123.2	4.72

Such facts point to the existence of an unsuspected evil, which demands investigation.

### RATS AND THE PLAGUE.

An interesting theory with regard to the dissemination of plague is brought forward by Dr. William Munro in a letter to the *Daily Mail*, in which he says:—"It is not the rats themselves, but the vermin which infest them (which latter are gorged with the bacilli of plague), by which bubonic plague is conveyed to man. Surely there can be no more certain method of spreading the disease in an infected district than offering money to all the idle lads in the place to kill and handle the rats while the bodies are still warm, and before the vermin have left them, as they do when the bodies are cold. In an infected area such work should only be done by officials, properly protected by waterproof clothing against the attacks of the vermin, and who know they must on no account touch a rat they kill or find dead. All such should be soaked in paraffin oil and burned where they lie, if possible—the ground round them being soaked by perchloride solution. When it is not possible to burn the bodies where they are killed, they should be drenched in paraffin oil, picked up with a shovel or tongs, and carried to where they can be destroyed. When a ship reaches port with plague on board, fumigations with the object of destroying the rats on board, should not be carried out after she has come into dock, when the rats will simply swarm ashore. The work should be done while the ship is still at a distance from the shore.

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