

Annotations.

A DAILY BULLETIN IN INFECTIOUS CASES.

The necessary isolation in hospitals of patients suffering from infectious diseases presses very hardly at times upon anxious relatives and friends. The Sheffield City Corporation is, therefore, to be congratulated on inaugurating a system by means of which the daily condition of the patients in the hospitals under the control of the City Corporation can be reported to their friends.

Each patient receives an identification number on admission, and each day his condition at 3 p.m. is telephoned by the hospital authorities to the central police offices by number. From that office the information is distributed to the divisional stations and sub-stations, where the office clerk fills in, on special forms, the condition of the patients under the various headings.

The friends must, of course, acquaint themselves with the identification number of the patient on admission, in order to benefit by this arrangement. Those living at a distance can then have the comfort of a daily bulletin, and need suffer no unnecessary anxiety through ignorance of the condition of those dear to them.

THE HEALTH OF LONDON.

The report of the Public Health Committee of the London County Council, which includes the report of the Medical Officer of Health for the county, has been issued, and contains some interesting details as to the state of the population, the marriage, birth, and death rate, outbreak of diseases, and the measures taken for the protection and preservation of the public health: The death rate, 15.2 per 1,000, is the lowest on record, and the rate of infant mortality has also declined, although still too high. The marriage rate showed a slight decrease, and the birth rate also declined, being 28.4 per 1,000 living, which is the lowest recorded in London since the system of civil registration was instituted. Small-pox showed a great decrease, there being only 416 notified cases, against 7,796 in the previous year. The mortality from measles was 2,046, and the disease has now, with the exception that it is still not notifiable, been placed on a level with dangerous infectious diseases. There was a decrease in the number of cases of scarlet fever, diphtheria, and enteric fever, and the deaths from phthisis were decreased by 300. In the case of cancer the deaths were 4,695, the annual average of the last ten years being 3,964.

Medical Matters.

THE EFFECTS OF PRESERVATIVES ON HEALTH AND DIGESTION.



Dr. W. H. Wiley, chief of the Bureau of Chemistry in the United States Department of Agriculture, delivered at Philadelphia on November 4th, under the auspices of the Franklin Institute, a lecture entitled "The Results of Experimental Studies of the Effects of Preservatives on Health and Digestion." He pointed out that various methods of preserving food have been practised since earliest times. Among such methods are the removal of water and the use of certain condimental substances, such as salt, sugar, vinegar, and wood-smoke. More recently sterilisation of food by heat and the exclusion of germs has been practised and constitutes one of the safest and most approved methods of preservation. Still more recently a system of food preservation has grown up based on the use of so-called antiseptics which have the power of inhibiting or destroying the germs of putrefaction. The more common of these are boric acid, borax, salicylic acid, benzoic acid, sulphurous acid, and formaldehyde. There is a wide difference of opinion among physiologists and chemists as to the effects of such substances. In order to clear up the matter, a series of experimental observations were made for a period of nine months under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, borax and boric acid being added to food, beginning with small amounts ($9\frac{1}{2}$ grains) and gradually increasing them to from 45 to 60 grains daily. It was found that the maximum amounts caused disturbance of digestion and derangement of health, as manifested by impairment of appetite, loss of weight, a feeling of uneasiness and sometimes of pain in the stomach, a sense of fulness in the head, often developing into a dull and persistent headache, a general disturbance of the metabolic activities of the digestive organs, and other unpleasant symptoms. When the small amounts were employed for a long time similar symptoms developed, though in lesser degree. It may therefore be concluded that while the injection of small amounts of borax occasionally with the food would do no permanent injury to an ordinary healthy individual, it might prove distinctly hurtful under the reverse conditions.

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