

"Cases of plague arrive from time to time at the Port of London, and I am told," said the lecturer, "that every now and again they also arrive from the Far East at Vancouver. Although precautions may be taken to isolate cases of plague, yet rats may become infected, may creep along ropes to the shore, and there infecting other rats might begin pestilence. This would probably remain for some time limited, but by acquiring virulence like the plagues of old, might spread along the railway lines to every part of the kingdom.

"In Canada, from which I have just returned, forest fires are a great evil. Many of them are started by cinders from the railway locomotives. To avert the danger a broad strip is kept ploughed along either side of the railway line, so that any cinders lighting upon it shall die out and no fire shall spread. What would we think of the conduct of those who, instead of pursuing this course should carefully place along the railway lines dried leaves, dried hay, or inflammable stuff which would inevitably blaze up if a burning cinder were to fall upon it? We should certainly say that they were fools or worse, and yet this is very much the course we are pursuing by allowing rats and flea-infested districts to exist in the East End of London and Vancouver, places which are in daily danger of infection by plague."

A NATIONAL DANGER.

The lecturer concluded by expressing the hope that he might have drawn attention "to what is already well known, the great need there is for the endowment of what might be called 'pathological entomology,' and to the fact that such minute and despised creatures as fleas may actually constitute a national danger."

DRINK DEGENERATION.

Dr. Fletcher Little, writing in the *Medical Press*, says that the degeneration of the race attributable to alcohol has become so serious that there is a duty on the medical profession to deal with the problem.

The London police magistrates have pointedly commented on the very marked increase of drunkenness in women. He suggests that the profession should consider what has been the after-effect of alcohol on the female constitution and habits when administered in the following cases:—1. In painful menstruation; 2. During labour; 3. During lactation, to increase the flow of milk; 4. During the depression that so often accompanies the menopause, and, assuming these after-effects to be deleterious, how they may best be combated, and, if possible, prevented.

The Smoke Problem at the Royal Sanitary Institute.

As is frequently the case, the discussion on Thursday last provoked by able papers from Dr. Parkes and Dr. Des Vœux proved more fruitful than the papers themselves. The subject of prevention of the smoke nuisance, and incidentally also of both black and yellow fogs, its lineal descendants, is one upon which public opinion, and especially that of the trained nurse needs forming. We are still, as it were, looking through a half-closed door at some of the greater influences which affect, not only individual life, but the life of the nation. Socially and municipally we are in arrears.

It is two hundred years ago that, as Dr. Des Vœux reminded us, King William III. gave as a reason for transferring his residence from London to Hampton Court, the smoke from the many chimneys which mingled with the fog. Yet the same blessed smoke remains with us, having become so much a part of ourselves, as Londoners, that except when bishops are lost in the fog, or railway accidents, bring the matter forcibly home to us, we practically ignore it. Possibly we are unaware that this great public nuisance is a preventable one—Nottingham has prevented it; and why? Because it was to the public interest to do so. The lace factories require a clean atmosphere for their lace, and they have got it, by increased boiler space, and other means.

Our children, too, require a clean atmosphere; but they have not got it. The pocket rules, the human being goes under. The children may cry, but the pocket cries louder. So, cheerily, the pocket fills, and grows fat and well-liking. But the little ones waste and die, victims of the white plague, of respiratory troubles, of asthenia, of the many ills to which the want of pure air forms a contributory cause.

Pure air—one of the greatest boons we know—the hope of the physician for many a patient, the direct causative agent of hundreds of renewed lives, is far more attainable than we are accustomed to suppose, even in our great commercial centres, in London, Manchester, Warrington, despite manufactures and collieries and electric light companies.

All chimneys burning bituminous coal, are giving out into the air 350,000 grains of sulphur for every ton of coal consumed, and in London we consume 15 million tons of coal annually—an unthinkable quantity. Dr. Rideal reminds us of a very simple test of

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