

Medical Matters.

PRECAUTIONS AGAINST CHOLERA.

The Local Government Board has issued a circular to port sanitary authorities and certain riparian sanitary authorities, signed by Mr. H. C. Monro, secretary, and dated August 19th, 1910, as follows:—"I am directed to call your attention to the fact that cholera is again seriously epidemic in Russia, particularly in the St. Petersburg district and at Cronstadt and other Russian ports. The sanitary authorities of British ports trading with Russia should be on their guard against the importation of cholera into their districts by vessels coming from places where the disease has appeared or is likely to appear. In this connection it is essential that the medical officers of health of such British ports should endeavour to keep themselves informed as to the spread of the present outbreak of cholera, and especially as to the continuance of the disease in ports where it now exists and its appearance in other ports not yet known to be affected by it. The statement which the Board issues weekly to the medical officers of health of port and riparian sanitary authorities, and which contains information as to such cholera occurrences as have come under the Board's notice, will be of assistance in this direction. I am to remind you that on September 9th, 1907, the Board issued a revised General Order relating to cholera, yellow fever, and plague on ships arriving from foreign ports. The Board relies on the port and riparian sanitary authorities taking all necessary steps under that Order to prevent the introduction of cholera into this country. Special attention should be paid to ships bringing aliens from Russia to British ports." The Local Government Board for Scotland has also issued a circular regarding cholera. The necessity for readiness and vigilance is pointed out. Special precautions should be observed with regard to vessels coming from North Russian and Black Sea ports. Probably never before, says the *British Medical Journal*, have such full, careful, and elaborate means been taken for meeting a possible outbreak of cholera in Scotland. Dr. Dittmar has recently been visiting all the medical officers of health and making arrangements against possible contingencies. The various ports in the Firth of Forth are of course danger zones, carrying on as they do much trade with Russian Baltic ports. It is not always the important ports that are the most dangerous points. On the contrary, it is often some insignificant port that is the inlet for danger.

DISINFECTION OF THE SURGEON'S HANDS BEFORE OPERATING.

The Berlin correspondent of the *Lancet* reports that opinion with respect to the most efficacious mode of disinfecting the skin for surgical purposes is undergoing a remarkable alteration. Washing and brushing, which have hitherto formed a principal feature in the operation room, will soon be a thing of the past here. The painting of the field of operation with tincture of iodine, devised by Dr. Grossich, has more and more replaced the modes of disinfection formerly in use. Dr. Schumburg of Strasbourg, a staff-surgeon of the army, has recently warned surgeons against reliance on washing their hands with soap and water. He has found by bacteriological research that brushing the hands with soap and hot water does not destroy the germs, even when continued for 15 or 20 minutes, but that washing with 200 grammes of absolute alcohol destroys 99 per cent. of the germs. Instead of a brush, a piece of gauze moistened with the alcohol is used. According to him the soap softens the skin and the capsules of the bacteria so that the latter stick to the skin and cannot be removed by the brush. The alcohol, on the contrary, hardens the skin and the capsules of the bacteria so that the adhesion between them decreases, the result being that the bacteria can be easily removed from the skin by a piece of gauze. Preliminary washing with soap and water is to be avoided because the alcohol becomes diluted and the skin damaged. By order of the Army Medical Department the new method has been tried in the larger military hospitals and the reports are very favourable.

AN OUTBREAK OF SPOTTED FEVER.

The outbreak of spotted fever in Leicestershire still, it is reported, causes grave anxiety, and very strenuous efforts are being made to stamp it out. The Local Government Board have sent down a special medical inspector, who is making extensive inquiries with a view to discovering the cause of the outbreak, and he is actively co-operating with the medical officers of health and the medical men in the affected area.

Attempts are being made to reassure the inhabitants of the district so as to minimise the loss which has fallen upon the shopkeepers and tradesmen of the eleven infected places; but those living in the neighbourhood are taking the precaution of keeping away from them as much as possible. In some cases shopkeepers complain that owing to the mysterious nature of the disease they have lost all their best customers, as they are afraid to consume provisions which have been stored in the affected area.

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