

## TYPHUS FEVER "CARRIER."

### GREENOCK MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

In his annual report for 1920, which has just been issued, Dr. J. H. G. Whiteford, Medical Officer of Health for Greenock, gives some interesting details, reported in the *Glasgow Herald*, in regard to the outbreak of typhus fever which took place during the year. In all 24 cases occurred. Dr. Whiteford says the first case occurred on June 1st, being notified as enteric fever, but the diagnosis of typhus was established at once on removal to hospital. The contacts were removed to the reception-house, from where one of these was removed on the following day suffering from the disease—a mild case in a child five years of age. No definite origin for these cases could be obtained, but the house was observed to be verminous. Disinfection, scrubbing, and lime-washing were carried out, and no further cases occurred in the same house until September 7th, over three months later. Three weeks after the first case another was notified to me as enteric fever in another part of the town, but was seen to be typhus fever and was removed to hospital. On inquiry being made it was discovered that this person had helped to nurse a neighbour who had died, certified as "basal meningitis," three weeks previously, and it was also noted that this man who had died was the father of the original case occurring in June. The houses and persons concerned were markedly verminous, and the usual methods of disinfection already mentioned were performed, and the contacts removed to the reception-house. From that time till December 27th, when the last case was notified, there were 20 further cases, making 24 cases in all, the case notified as "basal meningitis" being obviously a missed case.

Endeavours to trace the causation of these cases revealed certain rather interesting features. The widow of the man who was reported as having died of basal meningitis was found to have, in a period extending over three months, visited four houses in various parts of the town in which 11 cases occurred, and it was definitely established that this woman was, and had been, in good health during all the period of the outbreak. As regards the remainder of the cases, no direct causation was to be found, except that they were all members of the Roman Catholic Chapel of which the first case was also a member, and it is suggested that as these cases occurred at much longer intervals than is generally supposed to represent the incubation period of typhus fever, if the disease was transmitted from this common meeting-place, the causation was by means of vermin and not by direct means of infection. In the case of the widow who has already been referred to, I am quite convinced that we had here a "carrier" of the disease in quite a different sense than is usually employed, in that she was unsusceptible to the disease herself, but carried the disease-carrying vermin and distributed them in various quarters. This is, I believe, quite a new experience, and as

soon as I appreciated the possibilities I had her confined to the reception-house and thoroughly disinfected. She was connected with no further case.

## WHAT IS A VOLUNTARY HOSPITAL?

Sir William Collins, in a letter addressed to the press, points out that the newly constituted Voluntary Hospitals Commission have ventured where Lord Cave's Committee feared to tread, and have vouchsafed the definition of a voluntary hospital:—

"An institution (other than an out-patient dispensary) managed by a responsible committee, and wholly or mainly supported from voluntary sources (including income derived from endowments or investments), the object of which is to provide medical or surgical treatment of a curative character."

It remains to be seen whether this definition will hold, in the light of the discussions at Newcastle and elsewhere, and some may regret the difficulty of maintaining unmodified the voluntary system "in which most of us have been brought up, with all its splendid ideals and occasional defaults."

## A TERRIBLE DISASTER.

The large number of nurses to whom Dr. Herbert E. Cuff, Principal Medical Officer to the Metropolitan Asylums Board, was well known, and by whom he was much liked and greatly respected, will learn with sorrow of the terrible tragedy which has befallen him and his two daughters in their death by drowning at Burnham Ovary, Norfolk, on August 15th, Mrs. Cuff being a witness from the beach.

The two girls, of 14 and 12, both said to be good swimmers, entered a rough sea with a friend, and got into difficulties. Dr. Cuff, who was on the beach with his wife, at once went to their assistance, but was carried away by a wave, and disappeared as well as his daughters. Mr. Edward Colbeck, a Sandhurst cadet, also endeavoured to effect a rescue, but though he succeeded in bringing the elder girl ashore, artificial respiration was unavailing. The bodies of Dr. Cuff and his younger daughter were eventually recovered by a boatman.

In addition to those nurses who worked at the North-Eastern Hospital, Tottenham, while Dr. Cuff was Medical Superintendent there, the fact that he collaborated with the late Miss Isla Stewart in writing "Practical Nursing," a widely used text-book for nurses, brought him into touch with a large number of nurses outside the Metropolitan Asylums Board.

They will, we are sure, wish to unite with us in offering their most respectful sympathy to Mrs. Cuff in the horrifying tragedy which has overwhelmed her.

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