

seen how dangerous the new route would be had medical science not found the means to ensure safety; and it is easy to speculate on the speed and certainty with which yellow fever would have reached these countries had the completion of the canal preceded the discoveries of Reed's commission.

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An occasional newspaper item reminds us that a disease known as plague exists in some countries. You may not know that in India alone, in the year 1903, there were nearly 850,000 deaths reported as resulting from this disease, and one can only guess at the number of deaths which occurred in obscure parts of the country and were not reported. I have no complete statistics for more recent years, but in one week of 1904—that ending March 19, 40,527 deaths from plague were recorded in India, which is at the rate of more than 2,000,000 per year. It is India particularly that this disease ravages, for there climatic and geographical conditions, overcrowding, filth, and native apathy or superstitious resistance, combine to make the task of the public health service well nigh hopeless. Many of the lower animals are very susceptible to the disease, notably ducks, geese, turkeys, pigeons, sheep, pigs, dogs, cats, and—above all—rats. All these contribute to the dissemination of the disease and add to the difficulty of controlling it. Birds are doubtless accountable for the frequent outbreaks of the disease in isolated and seemingly well guarded communities. In the cities and towns the rat is suspected of being the most common carrier of the bacillus, but only indirectly by the aid of some of the numerous kinds of fleas which distribute their attentions between rats and men. Because of this belief, sanitarians in plague districts are satisfied with smaller game than that of the African jungle, and indulge in an enthusiastic, vigorous and well organized rat hunt. Some idea of the extent to which this is carried, as well as of the exhaustive nature of the studies which are being pursued is given by the fact that no less than 117,000 rats were examined at the Hong Kong Experimental