

THE BUBONIC PLAGUE.*

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THE present onward march of the plague must attract the attention of all thinking men and particularly of the sanitarian, when one considers its progress in spite of the stringent regulations enforced against infected districts since the well known outbreak of this disease in Canton and Hong-Kong in 1894. Slowly but surely since then it has advanced until now it has become quite widespread. In 1896 it obtained a foothold in India, especially in the Bombay Presidency though now it is raging in other districts, particularly in Calcutta. Week after week since the period of infection the same tale is heard from the infected districts and the plague has seemingly come to stay in India. In the city of Bombay alone during the first three months of this year there has been an average of 450 deaths per week from the plague, and at least triple this number for all India. Since 1896 it has progressively infected Madagascar, Arabia, Egypt, the Mauritius, some South American ports particularly those on the Rio Platte and some Brazilian ports (Santos and Bahia.) Last summer (1899) there was an outbreak in Oporto in Portugal but it seems to have been stamped out both there and in Egypt. Since the new year we have heard of the plague in epidemic form in the Hawaiian Islands (Honolulu) and recently the cities of Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne in Australia have been declared infected, over 100 cases having already occurred in Sydney. Some cases have been brought into both English and American ports *e.g.* in London in 1897 several cases occurred at the Seaman's Hospital at Greenwich. It was from these cases I obtained the cultures I here show you. Quite recently you will remember a steamer from Bahia in Brazil brought 5 cases of plague into New York harbor. Cases of this kind must be occasionally cropping up, and without the exercise of the strictest surveillance at our ports of entry, we may yet have to cope with the plague in this country. I believe it very unlikely that it will ever obtain an epidemic footing as our sanitary conditions though not of the best are yet I think able to cope with the disease. Yet it is well to keep this probability in mind.