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The Plague in India.

It will probably surprise most readers to learn that, after six years of endeavor to get rid of the plague in India, the disease is now more widely prevalent than ever it has been before. We have heard less of the ravages of the plague of late than we did a few years ago, but this, it appears, is not due to any diminution of the virulence of the disease or of the extent to which it prevails, but rather to the fact that the plague has become a commonplace thing in India and its ravages are accordingly not so much as formerly made the subject of news despatches. Mr. Edward Cotes, writing from Simla to the *Toronto Globe* under date of Oct. 4, 1903, quotes from official reports showing that more than a million and a half of persons have died of the plague in India since the epidemic began, and that for the past three years the death rate from this cause has been rapidly increasing. The figures given are as follows:

Year	Deaths	Year	Deaths
1896	1,700	1901	274,000
1897	56,000	1902	577,000
1898	118,000	1903, 1st 3 mos.	300,000
1899	135,000		
1900	93,000	Total	1,554,700

The real total of deaths is said to be considerably larger for great numbers of cases have either escaped notice or have been purposely concealed by the friends of the sufferers in order to avoid the inconvenience of segregation and disinfection. The contagion has spread over the entire peninsula from its original focus in Bombay. Country towns and remote villages are affected equally with the great centres of trade. It is difficult to point to any considerable place in which the contagion has been permanently eradicated after once obtaining a general hold. The returns of mortality show that people were dying a short time ago at the rate of more than four thousand a day, and that nearly six thousand a day are attacked. The effect upon the industries of the country is very great, although of course not so paralyzing as it would be in a less densely populated country than India. "Passing through the United Provinces last month," writes Mr. Cotes, "I heard of fields going out of cultivation, of villages deserted, of native subordinate officials applying to be transferred, of Europeans from the great cotton fields of Cawnpore scouring the country for men to replace those who had fled from the factories for fear of plague. I looked in Lucknow in vain for the dense crowds usually to be seen in the native quarters of this human hive of 270,000 inhabitants." The disease does its work very rapidly and in the great majority of cases with fatal results. "A few hours of dazed misery and the man is dead. The attack comes on with a suddenness that has caused it to be compared to the bite of the cobra."

Cause and Remedy.

The plague is recognized as a dirt disease. It is "the punishment of dirt, of darkness and of over-crowding. But famine also has doubtless in many cases played a part in reducing the strength of the patient so that he is unable to withstand the force of the disease. The contagion dwells in the mud floors of the native houses. Bouts are accordingly a protection, as they come between the wearer and the infected floors. The disease cannot establish itself in open, sun-baked, wind-swept ground. Villagers who take refuge in the jungles soon find that they have no fresh cases. Europeans or Americans have in very few cases been attacked by the plague, and these few appear to be those of missionaries who have been much with the native people. The infection appears to be unable to establish itself in the comparatively clean and spacious houses in which most white people in India reside. The plague is also comparatively rare among the Mohammedans of the United Provinces. This is accounted for by the fact that the Mohammedans in that part of India shut themselves up much less than do the Hindus. Mr. Cotes thinks that Europe and America have no cause to fear the plague on their own account. The East suffers from it because of its sanitary sins. The plague is in India to stay. But it is an ill which the country is painfully learning to combat. The people are taking the measures which they have learned by experience to be effective in protecting themselves against it. If the terrible experience through which the country is passing in reference to this deadly disease shall effectively teach the people the value of cleanliness and other sanitary conditions, the visitation, terrible as it is, will not be without compensation.

The Assouan Dam.

Everyone has heard of the Assouan Dam on the Nile, which has been called the greatest engineering feat of modern times. The great Assouan wall stretches from the right bank of the Nile to the left, a distance of a mile and a quarter. The wall is pierced by 180 sluices, through which, at certain periods of the year, the water will rush at the rate of 900,000 tons per minute. This wall will hold back 308,084,250,000 gallons of water. The pressure against each of the sluices will exceed 300 tons, and yet the machinery for their opening and shutting is so delicate that a child could let loose the rushing water of the man-made sea. It is expected that the dam will add immensely to the agricultural resources of Egypt by providing a constant supply of water for irrigation purposes, thus greatly enhancing the value of lands now under cultivation and also, it is hoped, converting hundreds of miles of arid, unproductive sand into fertile pastures. But this increase of fertility has not been secured without the sacrifice of some things which are counted valuable. The tourist and the archaeologist especially deplore the partial obliteration of the Island of Philæ, the most beautiful spot on the Nile, which the construction of the dam has involved. "When the waters in the huge artificial lake, 144 miles long, run to their highest level, the storied walls of Philæ, its world-famous Nilometer, its colonnades and Roman quays, will disappear for the first time in this 3,000 years of history." The island of Philæ was about 1,200 feet long and 450 feet broad, fringed with palms, and almost covered with ancient buildings, several of which were as fine examples of Egyptian and Roman architecture as are to be found in any part of the world. The great temple of Isis, to whom the island was sacred, was built by Ptolemy Epiphanes. The highest water level will be up to the floors of the temple. The Nilometer steps and its ancient registers of the Nile's rising will be perennially under water, and no more accessible. The lovely little temple of Hathor will be submerged. The Temple of Isis, just above the sacred stair, will be the only bit of dry ground left. The Roman arch of Diocletian's time will be no more seen. The sculptured rock of Konosso, with its stories of 4,000 years ago, can then only be viewed from a boat, and part of its inscription will be lost beneath the water. All the lovely date palms will die. But few, even among the tourists and the archaeologists, will think that the price paid too large for the gain secured by the construction of the great dam at Assouan. For Egypt will gain immeasurably, "famine will be impossible in the land, and there will be many (far more ancient) temples left in other parts of Egypt for archaeologists to study and speculate about, but nothing so beautiful for the artist as was the green Isle of Philæ."

The Trotting Horse.

A short time ago it was announced to the world as a matter of great importance that a horse in the United States had accomplished the remarkable feat of trotting a mile in a trifle less than two minutes. The fact that this rate of speed has been attained by the trotting horse constitutes, doubtless, from the horseracer's point of view, a remarkable triumph. It indicates indeed that much can be accomplished by careful observation, judicious selection in breeding and by training, and those who have thought that the development of a horse which could trot a mile in two minutes was a great desideratum have naturally rejoiced in the triumph recorded. But it may well be asked what real advantage is it to the world to have horses that can trot a mile in two minutes or less? The modern trotting horse is not a thing of much practical value, and it is seldom a thing of beauty. It is a toy, and a very expensive toy at that. In its development so much of all that goes to make a horse really valuable as a servant of man has been sacrificed to the capacity for great speed for a short distance that the product is of comparatively little value except for racing purposes. The horse that is really needed is not an animal that can show a tremendous speed for a short distance, although lacking in strength of constitution and ability to stand hard work, but a horse that is always ready for service and which can when necessary maintain a gait of from twelve to fifteen miles an hour. The effort to produce the modern trotting horse—that is the horse of the race track—has not only had no valuable results so far as practical interests are concerned, but it has also been

attended by much that is evil and demoralizing. Racing is almost always associated with gambling and frequently also with excessive drinking. His interest in fast horses has been to many a young man the first step toward ruin. The men who support the race track and the gambling, without which the track would have small attractions for them, do not represent an interest which makes for either the material or the moral wellbeing of the country. The race track as generally conducted has a demoralizing influence upon the country, and therefore certainly should receive no encouragement directly or indirectly from our Governments and Legislatures. The proposal that the people of Nova Scotia should become partners in the racing and gambling business through the Government leasing its exhibition grounds to a company which desires to use it for such purposes is one which we feel sure will not receive favorable consideration by the Legislature of that Province.

The Chicago Horror.

One of the most terrible catastrophes of its kind on record, attended by a loss of life which is appalling and by scenes which seem too horrible for description occurred in connection with a fire in the new Iroquois theatre of Chicago on the afternoon of Wednesday last. The fire broke out during the second act of a play which it is said was the first dramatic production in the theatre since its erection. Conflicting accounts are given of the origin of the fire, but that which seems most probable attributes it to the breaking of an electric wire near the lower part of a piece of drop scenery. The fire, once started, spread rapidly. There was an attempt to lower the asbestos curtain intended as a protection to the audience-room in case of fire on the stage, but the curtain stuck when part way down, and the effect was, with the opened doors in the front and rear of the building, to create a strong draught which carried the flames with great force into the audience room burning many persons to death, those in the front balconies suffering most severely. Soon there came an explosion which lifted the roof of the theatre from the walls and shattered the great skylights into fragments. The explosion, it is supposed, was caused by the flames coming in contact with the gas reservoirs of the theatre. As soon as it was perceived that the building was on fire a panic seized the people and there was a wild rush for the exits. The means of egress were, it appears, not so good as they might have been, but if they had been the best possible they would have been wholly insufficient under the circumstances. According to the accounts given, many of those trying to escape fell in the passages and stairways overcome by the gas fumes and were trampled to death by those who followed in the mad rush to escape. It was in the doorways leading from the first and second balconies that the greatest loss of life occurred. When the firemen entered the building the dead were found stretched in a pile leading from the head of the stairway back to a point five feet in the rear of the door. This mass in the centre of the doorway reached to within two feet of the top of the passage way. All of the corpses at this point were women and children. The fight for life which must have taken place at these two points is something that is simply beyond human power adequately to describe. Only a faint idea of its horror could be derived from the aspect of the bodies as they lay. Women on top of the masses of dead had been overtaken by death as they were crawling on their hands and knees over the bodies of those who had died before them. Bodies lay in the first and second balconies in great numbers. In some places they were piled up in the aisles three and four feet deep, where some had fallen and others had tripped over the prostrate forms and all had died where they lay, evidently suffocated by the gas. The faces of many of the dead, especially those who were found near the doorways, were disfigured beyond all possibility of recognition by the feet of those who had trampled upon them in the endeavor to escape. The scenes which the building presented when the terrible panic was over as described in the despatches are terrible to think of. There are different accounts as the number of persons in the building at the time the fire broke out. Some account say there were 1300 present, others say the number was much larger and that hundreds of persons were standing in the passage ways. The number of the dead is reported to be about 585, and the number will be increased by the death of a number who are fatally injured. The total number of casualties, including the dead, the injured and the missing is said not to fall short of one thousand.