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## EDITORIAL.

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### THE SPREADING PLAGUE.

In 1894 the bubonic plague appeared in Hong Kong. From thence it spread to Bombay. During the next twelve years it had caused the death of at least 6,000,000 persons.

For a few years past it had been somewhat quiescent, when it appeared in a very virulent form in Manchuria, and has caused terrible ravages in and around Harbin.

Some two years ago the disease made its appearance in the State of California, and was only kept in check by the most vigorous efforts. Quite lately the disease has made its appearance at several points on the east coast of England. From time to time it makes its appearance in various places in Europe. A few years ago it became seriously prevalent in Holland.

Until 1906 very little was known as to the real method by which the infection was spread. The discovery was made that a certain variety of flea, called the *pulex cheops*, was the real factor in spreading the disease from infected rats to man. Since then it has been observed that the common rat flea, as well as the *pulex cheops*, acts as a carrier of the infection.

For some time it was also thought that the black rat was the only variety that was liable to the disease. This view has been set aside, and it is now well known that the brown rat is a host for the *bacillus pestis*. If the flea sucks blood from an infected rat the flea may infect a human being for a period of three weeks thereafter.

The plague assumes two main types—the bubonic and the pulmonic. In the former the lymphatic glands suppurate. It is on this type that the rat and the flea play the chief part in the spread of the disease, though it may be spread through cracks and abrasions in the skin, such as the feet of the natives going about where the infection is prevalent.

The pulmonic form is spread directly. This renders it by far the most dangerous type of the disease, as it may be conveyed from the sick