

opened out those germs of disease, bubonic plague, cholera, typhoid fever, etc., have the opportunity of being spread and propagated.

Subjected as they are on board ship to daily exposure to the purifying influences of fresh air, their quarters being daily ventilated and disinfected several times a week, it may be true, and likely is so, that the persons and clothing of the Chinese are free from disease, but as Dr. Lowson counselled me to be absolutely certain that no disease be introduced, the person's clothing and baggage must be disinfected prior to landing.

I am happy to be able to remark, as the result of my inquiries and personal observations, that the opinions expressed and the suggestions made by the Provincial Medical Health Officer, Dr. J. C. Davie, in regard to infectious and contagious diseases at the port of Hong-Kong were absolutely and strictly correct, and that in no way was anything done either by the provincial or the municipal authorities which was not necessitated by the facts of the case. Hong-Kong is emphatically an infected port, and as such must be regarded; indeed, it would be a neglect of duty hardly less than criminal not to fumigate the Chinese baggage, while in my opinion, to reduce the danger of the introduction of disease by such persons to a minimum, we should do as is done in Australian ports, disinfect their persons and clothing.

Having had during the year 1893 to handle 17 isolated cases of small-pox, I can speak feelingly on the subject. There were many obstacles against which the Health Department had to contend. The law or, possibly, its interpretation complicated matters very much, and local appliances and facilities were deficient.

I write and have written strongly on these points; but, as your Medical Health Officer, I do so with the strong conviction of my responsibility in the matter.

We cannot take too many precautions against infectious and contagious diseases, and I trust that the City Council will not only regard the subject as I do, but will adopt all measures that experience and common-sense have shown to be necessary. I have the honor to be, gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

GEO. H. DUNCAN, M.D.,

Medical Health Officer of Victoria, B.C.

Victoria, B.C., Oct. 20th, 1894.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEDICAL ATTENDANT IN MEDICO-LEGAL CASES.

A couple of cases of a medico-legal character have lately come to our notice—one of poisoning and the other a death by violence—both of which were attended by medical practitioners of first-class standing, and certificates given without a word of information having been vouchsafed to the authorities by either of the gentlemen in question. In one—the death by violence—the authorities heard nothing of it till by accident it transpired a few days after the burial; but in the poisoning fatality the coroner, judging by the accounts he read in the public papers, came to the conclusion that it was either a case of suicide or murder, had a consultation with the chief of police, and together they held an informal inquiry, and found, indeed, that the deceased had terminated his existence with a dose of "Rough on Rats." In this case the medical attendant assisted deceased's relatives in concocting a story for the public, and almost succeeded in throwing dust in the eyes of the officers of the law. In both these cases there was not the slightest intention on the part of the medical attendants to do a wrong; in the death from violence the silence proceeded from want of reflection, and no doubt because the victim lived some days after the injuries received; and in the other, from pure sympathy and a desire to prevent annoyance on the part of the friends and relatives. There is this danger, however, in matters of a criminal nature that medical men should take into consideration, and that is while they may be acting from motives of the very best kind in their own estimation, they may be running the risk of aiding in concealing an act of criminal homicide, and while it might not appear *in foro* conscientious to the physician that he was doing any wrong, he might find himself accused of being a *particeps criminis* in a case of wilful murder, and innocently suffer the extreme penalty of the law, as many have done before now under such circumstances.

And even though it did not go that far, there are very many minor inconveniences that might arise in an affair of that nature which a medical man should avoid by immediately reporting to the police all cases of deaths from violence or unfair