

## THE CHOLERA.

At a meeting convened by the National Health Society of London in reference to the probable outbreak of cholera, Dr. Ernest Hart, editor of the *Brit. Med. Journal*, made some very excellent and appropriate remarks. He was introduced to the meeting by Sir Richard Fayrer who presided. In introducing the lecturer he said it was an undoubted fact that cholera was prevailing in the Delta of the Nile and it therefore behooved the English people to be prepared for a possible extension of the disease to this country.

Dr. Ernest Hart said that materials for such a lecture abounded in every direction. With an increased knowledge of the laws of disease, we had been enabled to make each successive epidemic less severe. Cholera first invaded Europe after the introduction of steamboats, and in 1831-2 there was a very widespread epidemic which reached this country. In India our experience of it dated from 1808. The epidemic of 1831-2 first appeared in Russia, and despite quarantines and cordons, it gradually assailed every country in Europe. In 1848 there was a second great epidemic, and for the first time we rationally investigated—according to modern methods of investigation—the nature and causation of cholera. We then saw the clear connection between cholera and unhealthy conditions of life. It raged in different parts in proportion to the impurity of the water supply. The connection of water supply with cholera, Dr. Hart dealt with at considerable length. Pure water, he said, was a condition of primary importance in the prevention of an epidemic, and we had a right to expect thoroughly pure water from the monopolist companies. It was an anomaly that there were no penalties which could be enforced for the distribution of impure water. Others were not allowed to disseminate unhealthy things. A very small pollution of a vast body of water was capable of conveying to the whole of that body qualities which would produce an epidemic of cholera. To prevent the spread of the disease neither quarantines nor cordons were to be relied upon. Both had been proved by the experience of the whole of Europe in its calmer moments, and by the unanimous expressions of opinion of our Indian officers, to be cruel, selfish, morally wicked, and medically use-

less. Quarantine was an ancient and barbarous expedient which had been condemned by every authority which had examined into it. Common sense and cleanliness, were two far better things to fight cholera with than quarantines and cordons. At the Vienna Conference quarantine had been pronounced to be "impracticable and useless;" while a system of medical inspection was recommended to be adopted. Still more useless than quarantine was a system of cordons. There were four great things to be looked to—the air, the water, the soil, and personal precautions. As regarded infected air, it was known that cholera spread in precisely the same way as typhoid and enteric fever and diphtheria. Care must be taken after the ordinary means of ventilation, that houses were perfectly and properly drained, and that no sewer-gas could enter. Cholera was not a mysterious disease, passing from hand to hand, from individual to individual, and from distance to distance, by any unexplained means. English and European experience went to show that if pure air and pure water were obtained, and the pollution of the soil was prevented, cholera would be entirely escaped. Dust-bins, dirty linen, unhealthy food, and personal uncleanness would all encourage and in fact lead to cholera. It was of vital importance to know that cholera was not a disease infective from person to person in a direct sense, as small-pox and some other diseases were, and this knowledge made the disease lose many of its terrors. The prevention of the cholera depended upon the public authorities acting with spirit and incurring the necessary expenditure upon making and keeping clear our soil and our water supply, and upon individuals exercising proper supervision over the households they could control, and the poor whom they could help. These things would rob cholera of all its terrors. It was no rash thing to say that if cholera did reach the metropolis or any town in this country, the authorities, the medical men, and the people generally were armed with so much knowledge, and had made such progress in the methods of defending themselves against it, that no such epidemic of cholera in the future as there had been in the past need be feared.

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