

“LIBERTY” AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

THIS JOURNAL never has advocated anything approaching extreme measures in enforcing public health legislation; believing that all coercive measures should be preceded by education; indeed education will do vastly more than coercion in promoting both public and individual health. In this country there has not been yet it appears much trouble in having any coercive measures carried out; but little has been attempted here, in this way, however; and there has been some difficulty in the capital in making efforts, by the Board of Health, to isolate those sick with infectious disease. In England there has been issued a “Manifesto of the Right and Liberty defence league,” which raises certain considerations as to the proper limits of that interference with individual liberty which is claimed in the interests of public health. The immediate cause of this manifesto related to the subject of isolation.

John Stewart Mill maintained the right of every man to his own opinions, whatever they may be; but when he came to ask himself whether an equal liberty should be accorded to every man to act on those opinions, he only consented to discuss the point in so far as this liberty could be exercised by men “at their own risk and peril.” He added that no one could pretend that actions should be as free as opinions, and he further laid it down that “the liberty of the individual must be thus far limited—he must not make himself a nuisance to other people.” And Herbert Spencer, the great champion of liberty, says: “He who contaminates the atmosphere breathed by his neighbor is infringing his neighbor’s rights.

Hardly any one now questions the right

of the public authorities to remove nuisances. The difficulty has been sometimes to define what a nuisance really is. According to Spencer a man has [no right, but simply is permitted the] privilege by common consent, to allow the smoke of his chimney, or even, and more especially the smoke of his tobacco pipe or cigar, to contaminate the air, as of the sidewalks of a city, for example: Nor does hardly anyone of intelligence question the right to enforce isolation in cases of infectious disease. But, it must be borne in mind by the authorities, that common justice, as doubtless the higher courts would contend, for example in case of action at law, would demand that an isolation hospital should be in a perfectly satisfactory condition in every respect for the reception and after care of a patient. Without the precaution here indicated a municipality might incur heavy liability, or be compelled to pay heavy damages.

It may be here noted that even the Gipsies remove their cases of infectious disease to an isolated tent with a ring of rope around it to keep or warn off all who approach. And that it may be seen that coercive isolation in such cases is not entirely a modern innovation, we would draw attention to the fact that under an Act of the seventh year of King George I, 1721, it was enacted that in case an infected person quarantined in the pest house, “shall actually escape out of such house, lazaret, or other place, where he or she, shall be so placed, for performance of quarantine, before he or she shall have fully performed the same, he or she shall be adjudged Guilty of Felony, and shall suffer death as a felon without benefit of clergy.

IF you are very warm, or at all oppressed, STOP, AT ONCE, let not ANYTHING prevent this. Rest a little and cool off.

Go not into cold water when you are much heated, wait to get somewhat cooled, but not cold.; never go in when chilly.

DRINK not freely of iced or very cold water, especially when much heated or after a meal, but sip a little slowly.

PUT ice around, instead of in, the water jug, as ice is so often impure.