

Before finally leaving this subject, I would like to point out that the statement made so frequently that, because none of the "contacts" developed the disease, that therefore it could not have been plague, is a statement which contains no truth whatever. As well might it be said that A did not die of consumption because his wife living with him does not always contract the disease. All that the non-infection of the "contacts" proves is the truth of the statement already made, that the bubonic form of plague is the least infectious variety of the disease. Our danger lies not so much in the landing on our shores of a case of plague, but in the thousand-and-one insanitary conditions which exist all over the colony, conditions which make for the depreciation of the individual's power of resistance to disease, and at the same time affords a happy hunting-ground for that most energetic of colonisers—the rat.

Not from plague have we most to fear. Let but one case of small-pox escape the grasp of the inspecting officer, and within a few months there would be raised to that reaper, who plies his sickle without note of season, a harvest before which the number of victims of plague would pale in insignificance. The responsibilities of the opponents of vaccination are great, and "conscientious objectors" are many, but it will be found if ever that scourge comes amongst us that assuredly the one will not be allowed to forget what he has sown, though the other may disappear.

I have suggested to the District Health Officers that when once the Department is in full swing, in addition to the general work which falls to them to do, they should devote at least one report to the consideration of some large question affecting the health of the people. Meanwhile I offer the following brief remarks on the subjects of pollution of rivers and streams; drainage; water-supply; meat-supply; milk-supply; disposal of house-refuse; disposal of nightsoil; health of the Natives; and, finally, consumption.

POLLUTION OF RIVERS AND STREAMS.

For a young country like this, with its comparatively diffuse population, there is, strange to say, a very considerable contamination of the rivers and streams. The concentration of factories of all descriptions within the borough area is an invariable feature of all older and closely settled countries, but why it should be so in a country like New Zealand is as unexplainable as it is unfortunate. Streams which, but for the impurities which are constantly being thrown into them in the shape of waste products from factories, and sewage from towns, would be healthful as well as beautiful, are converted into nothing more or less than open sewers. That vigorous steps ought at once to be taken to at least prevent the further pollution of all our water-ways is agreed upon by all, the only point in dispute is how to effect the desired end. The Public Health Act gives power to local bodies to make by-laws to prevent the throwing of untreated sewage into rivers or streams, the water of which is used as a water-supply for either man or other animals. The position with respect to pollution by factories is not quite so definitely laid down. Even if it were, it would be wise to clearly distinguish between the two kinds of pollution. It has been the custom here, as it was in most of the older countries in the days of their youth, so to speak, for cities when they had advanced far enough to employ a system of sewerage, to seek the nearest way to a river or stream, and the pursuance of this policy has cost them millions of money to rearrange their sewers so that their contents could be treated in some way ere being run into the streams. It behoves us to profit by the experience of these older countries, and whenever opportunity offers adopt some method, septic-tank, irrigation, or whatever modern science suggests is best, for the treatment of all sewage before it is allowed to enter any of our rivers or streams. Local authorities have been warned that no new scheme of drainage will be considered safe or allowable unless provision is made for the treatment of the sewage before it enters the natural waterways. It is not unfrequently urged by local authorities that it is unfair to ask them to go to the expense of purifying the sewage, while other towns are allowed to continue polluting the streams; but our answer is that while it might be unfair to require sewerage schemes which have already been laid down to be taken up and rearranged, the same objection does not apply to those bodies which are introducing new systems of drainage. In some instances, however, it has been necessary to draw attention to the necessity of remodelling in the near future some of the systems already laid down, but I urge most strenuously that no new system be approved of unless provision be made for the treatment of the sewage before it enters the river.

DRAINAGE.

The absolute inutility of allowing suburban local bodies to act as Boards of Health is in no way emphasized so strongly as in this all-important Department of Public Health. An area containing, say, a large city and some half dozen satellites in the shape of suburban boroughs, each with its Mayor and Councillors, all striving, not so much for the common weal as for what they consider will most benefit their own particular portion—imagine such a picture, and it takes no "seer of old" to prognosticate what will happen. The greater part of their time is taken up by what they term "guarding the interests of their constituents." This is generally construed to mean seeing that the adjoining boroughs do not take advantage of them, and trying, if possible, to move their own burdens on to the shoulders of some one else. Take any of the large cities, and what do you find? Important sanitary works delayed year after year, because of want of agreement among those intimately concerned.

The remedy is simple, and its administration ought not to be delayed. Decide what districts have a community of interests, from a sanitary point of view; this done, place the administration of such districts into the hands of central governing bodies, and require them to proceed with the work. Of this I feel sure, no real progress will take place until this is done. As it is at present, a city wants to put up a destructor, or arrange for a nightsoil depot. The best site, from a health and engineering point of view, is decided upon; but the body under whose control this area of