

Valentine and myself. In Sydney the same uphill battle against ignorance, old institutions, and not infrequently something more is going on. The task of cleaning up and exterminating plague in Sydney is indeed a Titan's work. In addition to a very large permanent staff two medical men are in constant attendance at the office. Should any suspicious case be reported, immediately notice is given one of the doctors proceeds to examine the case. Where no doubt exists as to the case being one of plague the patient is at once sent down to Little Bay Hospital, under the care of Dr. Salter, a gentleman who has been engaged in plague almost entirely for the last three years. Should the visiting surgeon be in doubt he draws a small quantity of serum from the enlarged gland, which on his return to the laboratory is at once examined. If the *Bacillus pestis* is present the case is at once declared plague, and the case sent on to the hospital. A gang of workmen are then put on to clean up, and, if not kill, drive away all rats from the infected building. Wooden floors are torn up and concrete put down, walls are whitewashed, and not until the Health Officer is satisfied that all precautions have been taken are the people allowed to return to their homes.

While it is difficult to point out any better course of procedure which might be adopted, when the rodents are infected with plague, it cannot be gainsaid that the disturbance of infected rats and the driving them away into possibly hitherto unaffected areas must result in the dissemination of the disease. This is clearly realised by those in authority in New South Wales. Here in New Zealand we ought to profit by the unfortunate experience of other countries. As I have already said, so far as repeated examinations go to show, our rodents at the present time are not affected with plague; clearly, then, any war which we may wage against them cannot endanger the other parts of the community. Should we, however, wait until through outside sources or otherwise our rats become infected, any effort towards their extermination must be followed by the same undesirable results as has followed such delay in all other countries. In season and out of season I have dinned this into the ears of the various local authorities; some have listened and profited by the counsel, others have suggested delay. It is very gratifying to have to record that the various Harbour Boards throughout the colony have consistently striven to help the Department in all its efforts towards the extermination of rats.

Last year instructions were issued to the various authorities advising them to offer certain bonuses for rats caught and delivered at their destructors. At the time it was pointed out that considerable danger to the ratcatchers, who in many instances are boys, might result from the indiscriminate handling of any rat infected with plague; sufficient cause has been shown lately to justify us in again drawing attention to this danger. It was then proposed that no fee should be paid for any rat handed over at the local destructor unless such animal had been previously carefully singed. All that is necessary is simply to sprinkle some kerosene over the rat and set fire to it; in this way the vermin which infects the skin and fur of the rat are completely destroyed, and one at least of the sources by which infection is conveyed is eliminated.

In concluding this brief and general survey of plague as it affects, and has affected, the colony, I would reiterate the necessity of all medical men practising in New Zealand reporting at the very earliest opportunity the presence of any glandular enlargements unexplainable (by ordinary causes) occurring in their practice. Naturally all men are desirous of preserving the fair name of the city in which they reside, but when it is clearly realised that only by an early knowledge of all these minor cases can general safety be insured, local feeling and parochial sentiment ought to go to the wall. Each man should put the safety of the colony in the forefront; only in this way can the Department hope to cope with plague, or any other of the infectious diseases which may be introduced from the outside world.

SMALL-POX.

The presence of small-pox in London, Belfast, Glasgow, and other places with which our ships are in constant communication is a matter for the most serious consideration. The non-observance for the last few years of vaccination in this colony is a condition of things which must cause every one interested in public health the deepest regret. Speaking roughly, only some 25 per cent. of our child population are protected against small-pox. As compared with a case of plague, the danger which would arise from the introduction of a case of small-pox into this country is so great as to be almost inconceivable. The careful medical inspection which the Department has insisted upon of all oversea passengers is directed as much, if not more, to the detection of small-pox as of plague. There are some protective barriers which make for our safety: there is the length of time it takes a ship to come from the infected ports to New Zealand; the fact, also, that in most cases they either call at some port in Australia or at Hobart lends a certain amount of safety; but even with all these safeguards it is perfectly possible for a case of small-pox in its early stage to escape the vigilance and carefulness of the Port Health Officer because of the long period of incubation which this disease has, and the similarity of the symptoms in the early stage with that of other diseases which are usually considered not of very great importance. While it would be no reflection upon the professional skill or earnestness of a Port Health Officer to allow a case of small-pox in its incubation period to pass through his hands unnoticed, the physical damage to the younger part of our population would be almost incalculable.

As has been pointed out in a circular issued recently by the Department, the colony has, owing to the long absence of this disease, been lulled into a sense of false security. Among the ranks of those who impugn the virtues of vaccination, under the banner of the so-called Anti-Vaccination Army, there are many diverse units. In this band we have—small in number they certainly are—individuals who have carefully and honestly considered the statistics as to the minimising power of vaccination, but by far the great majority of the objectors to this protective inoculation are gathered under that flag in virtue of their ignorance. The logical fallacy of arguing from a particular to a general is nowhere better illustrated than in the majority of the objections