

*Leprosy.*

A Chinaman, working in a laundry in Auckland, was reported to be suffering from leprosy, but a careful inspection failed to reveal any trace of the disease.

*Plague.*

After an apparent absence for two years, plague in the bubonic form reappeared in Auckland in 1910, making the sixth year since 1900 in which Auckland has been attacked.

The last case in human beings had been notified in May, 1907, and in the same year during August a plague-infected rat was found in Customs Street East. During 1908 and 1909 no human cases were notified, and no plague-infected rats detected. It must be admitted, however, that the number of rats examined during these years was insufficient to warrant the assertion that no plague epizootic was present. Thus, during 1909 the total number examined was 165. It is, however, improbable that we should have escaped for two years had there been any extensive spread of infection among rodents, and some colour is lent to the theory that the reappearance in 1910 was due to reintroduction of infection from abroad by the fact that in April a few plague-infected rats were found near the wharves in Sydney, while the first case in Auckland was notified on the 9th May, the patient being employed in a laundry on the harbour-front in which the soiled linen from the Sydney boats was washed.

The outbreak was confined to three cases, all of whom worked in the low-lying area between Shortland Street and the harbour-front to the eastern side of Lower Queen Street, within a short distance of each other. Their residences, on the other hand, were widely scattered, and had obviously no connection with the conveyance of infection—one being in the city, another in Mount Eden, and the other in Kingsland.

The sanitary conditions of the premises in which they worked were not bad—indeed, in the first case they were exceptionally good, the building being very clean and free from rat-infestation, and so constructed as to offer no harbourage for rats, although rats could and did gain access thereto, since it was ascertained that a few days prior to his illness the patient found and removed two dead rats from below his work-bench. Doubtless they were infected, but as they were destroyed at once we had no opportunity of examining them. In the other two cases there was also a history of dead rats being found and handled by the patients, but though other corpses of rats were found during cleansing operations they were too far advanced in decomposition to enable a bacteriological examination to be made.

Subsequent to the discovery of the first case some 450 rats were collected from various parts of the city, more especially the harbour-front, but in none of these were there any evidence of infection. The epizootic must, therefore, have been very limited in extent—possibly confined to certain sewers to the east of Queen Street, from which the infected rats, driven out by floods or by the self-protective instincts of other rats, sought refuge in any quiet spot offering them shelter.

The total cases notified in Auckland since 1900 are now twelve, all of whom worked in Queen Street or its immediate neighbourhood, and all within a radius of a quarter of a mile.

*General Precautionary Measures.*—In addition to the ordinary measures of cleansing and disinfection at the workplaces and homes of the patients, the City Council temporarily engaged two extra inspectors to supervise the cleansing from refuse of premises in the infected area, and began the free distribution of poison. It is to be regretted that they did not see their way to place such work on a more permanent basis, as an examination of some of the business premises in and about Queen Street showed that constant supervision and enforcement of by-laws as to removal of refuse was needed. There is no doubt that there has been a relapse since beneficial results of the cleansing operations following the outbreak of 1907, and the old evils of rubbish-accumulated cellars and defective refuse-removal have once more appeared. It must be noted with regret that the majority of owners of business premises are very indifferent in the matter of sanitation. The Harbour Board have for some time employed a man specially for rat-trapping and poisoning among the wharves, and this work has been continued with renewed vigour. At the suggestion of the Department a circular was issued to shipowners as to disinfection and the poisoning of rats on coastal boats, a measure the need for which was apparent in 1907, when infected rats were found on a small steamer trading on the Manukau Harbour.

The Northern Steamship Company, who own a large fleet of coastal boats, have systematically disinfected their boats whenever they could be laid up for the purpose, and have adopted the suggestion of the Department as to the use of disinfectants of good insecticidal power.

The substitution of solid ferro-concrete wharves and built stone facings for the old rat-infested wooden structures is going on steadily, and will prove when complete one of the most valuable sanitary assets of the city.

The need for a more thorough examination of rats by the Health Department has been in some measure met by the appointment of a special officer to collect and prepare rats for examination.

During the autumnal months when plague was present all Government Departments were circularized as to the necessity for destroying rats and removing garbage.

The staff of the Department was increased temporarily by the presence of Chief Inspector Schauer, who conducted some special investigations.

The following is a brief report on the three cases of plague:—

CASE I.—H.H.E., male, æt. 40. Engineer in the New Zealand Laundry, Quay Street. Case notified on 9th May, that being the fourth day of his illness. In company with Dr. Bull I visited this man at his home in Mount Eden. Found him suffering from bubo in right groin and high temperature, and ordered his removal to the observation ward at the district hospital, accompanying him there in the ambulance. Sanitary condition of house good. Disinfection done immediately on removal by local authority. Other occupants kept under surveillance for five days.