

and when the poor found that the dead were treated with decency and respect, I found no opposition to their being sent there."

Here, then, was a very natural solution, and at the same time a successful one, for a great difficulty arising from the overcrowded state of our cities and towns. Perhaps no clearer proof of the existence of the evil could be given, and no more satisfactory method of getting rid of it indicated, than the preceding evidence affords.

SECTION VII.

ON THE EXECUTION OF THE REGULATIONS OF THE GENERAL BOARD OF HEALTH BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

THE duties devolving on Boards of Guardians and other local boards by the issuing of the Regulations were of a two-fold character. 1st. As to preparatory measures of a sanitary kind. 2nd. As to the medical relief of cholera and its premonitory symptoms. The evidence obtained during the sanitary inquiries which had intervened between the epidemics of 1832 and 1848, had demonstrated that cholera always localized itself amongst the most neglected part of the population. The causes of this selection of locality had been clearly ascertained, and some of them proved to be easily removable, but others were found to require permanent works for this purpose. The regulations of the General Board of Health were specially directed against the removable causes, which all persons, whether private or public, having any power over them, were required to abate immediately, and Boards of Guardians were directed to see to the execution of the regulations.

In order that they might do this the more effectually, and at the same time exercise the most important and responsible functions of protecting the public health, now reposed in them, a very simple and rational course of procedure was pointed out. The Guardians were required "to direct their clerk to make out from the Register of Deaths, or from the district medical relief books, or other sources from which information may be obtained within the union, a list of places where epidemic, endemic, or contagious diseases, have of late been frequent."

This regulation is of extreme importance, because the places indicated are the invariable centres from which epidemic diseases begin and spread, and cholera had previously *been proved* to obey the law of other epidemics in this respect. Such a list would have told the Guardians at a glance the precise spots on which their preventive efforts required to be expended.

After the preparation of this list the Guardians were required

"to cause the medical officers employed by them, or specially appointed for the purpose to visit the places, of which a list shall have been made out as aforesaid, and all such neighbouring or other places within such union or parish as shall appear to such medical officers (from being under like circumstances with the places included in such list or otherwise) to require visitation or examination."

And after making the examination the medical officers were directed

where necessary to certify to the Board of Guardians, local boards, surveyors, owners or occupiers, &c.,

"all such places as are in a state dangerous to health, or need frequent and effectual cleansing by way of preservation against disease, and such dwelling-houses as are in a filthy and unwholesome condition, and all such nuisances and matters injurious to health as ought to be abated, cleansed, or removed under these regulations."

This process of preparation was intended to begin all over the country as soon as the regulations of the General Board of Health were issued. Nothing could be more simple than the procedure, but it must be obvious that its whole efficiency depended on the making out of a list of epidemic localities, and directing the medical officers to visit and report on their state, and to certify such precautions as were required. I am warranted by experience in stating that had this process been rigorously carried out the severity of the epidemic attack would have been materially lessened, and a vast number of lives saved; but I am sorry to say that in the majority of instances no efficient steps of the kind were taken, and in many the regulation was totally neglected. It is fortunate that town councils, and other local boards, having cleansing powers, frequently took an independent course, and no doubt much good was done in this way; but in most of such instances the active cleansing operations were not commenced till the epidemic appeared, and in a few they had to be carried out while the disease was ravaging the towns; while in almost all, that concentration of effort on the epidemic localities, and that continued watchfulness over them which could only have been exercised by a rigid adherence to the letter of the regulations, appeared neither to have been understood nor put in force. I am truly glad to have been able to adduce examples of a very different kind, but the undeniable saving of life which resulted only makes the great losses which have arisen from local neglect elsewhere appear the more lamentable.

The provisions of the Contagious Diseases Prevention Act, for removing nuisances, were very generally put in force with greater or less effect; but as *continued cleansing and inspection of fever districts* was the preventive measure really required, the simple abatement of a few nuisances, though praiseworthy in itself and useful, so far as it went, was by no means sufficient to protect the public health.

A true and intelligent sense of the awful calamity impending over the country, and of the unremitting energy which would be required to prepare the population, as far as practicable, to resist it, would have led to the immediate exercise of all the powers granted as soon as they became known, and to their continued exercise until the last footsteps of the epidemic had disappeared from the country.

The preparatory measures, generally speaking, were thus only partially and, as a necessary consequence, inefficiently applied.

When cholera actually appeared more energy was in general displayed. There was more street and house cleansing, and more lime-washing. That these steps did good there can be no question, but a moment's consideration will show that they were not those *mainly* contemplated by the General Board of Health, inasmuch as it was not exactly the time to strengthen the resisting power of a people to enable it to withstand a mortal disease when that disease had actually located

itself amongst them. Whole months of *preparation* would have been required to fulfil the intentions of the regulations.

In some cases I am sorry to say I have found nothing done even while the epidemic was ravaging the towns. All the old localizing causes were left untouched. To all intents and purposes no one fact of sanitary science might ever have been ascertained; so far as the local authorities were concerned; and, as might have been expected, the most disastrous consequences have in these instances ensued.

From the defective manner in which the preparatory measures were carried out, the chief reliance in saving life had to be placed on measures of a medical preventive nature. It was ordered that where extraordinary medical aid is required for persons attacked, or threatened by cholera or epidemic, endemic, or contagious diseases:—In such cases the Guardians were

“authorized and required to provide sufficient medical aid, and in suitable places such medicines as may be required within their respective unions for necessitous persons attacked by cholera or by premonitory symptoms, and to make arrangements for the distribution of notices, stating the places where aid and medicines shall have been provided.”

The Guardians were also required to provide

“suitable rooms capable of accommodating necessitous cases to which persons attacked by cholera, who cannot be properly treated in their own houses, may be conveyed.” It was also required that “rooms or places of refuge should be provided, to which may be removed the families of such necessitous persons as have been attacked with cholera, and also such necessitous persons living under the same roof with or in the vicinity of persons so attacked, as the medical officers acting under authority of the said Guardians may deem it necessary to remove.”

The vacated houses were directed to be cleansed before the families returned.

These regulations comprehend the legal provisions of the Contagious Diseases Prevention Act for the relief of cholera, and the various notifications of the General Board of Health fully explained their object, and the best methods of applying them, while in a number of instances special regulations were issued, enforcing minute details of procedure which were generally initiated or carried out under my own inspection.

With a few exceptions, the General Regulations, as to medical aid, dispensaries, and houses of refuge, were certainly not exercised in such a manner as to fulfil the intentions of the Board: but when special regulations were issued, and their execution seen to, the results generally speaking were highly satisfactory, as has been already shown in the preceding sections of this Report.

Most of the difficulties which were experienced throughout the whole course of the epidemic arose from certain defects in the Act of Parliament under which the regulations were issued, and which could not have been anticipated at the time it was passed.

It was apparently the intention of the Contagious Diseases Prevention Act that the medical relief to be afforded during the continuance of the epidemic cholera should be considered as an extension of the ordinary parochial medical relief; whereas the real necessities of the case required that the Boards of Guardians should, as far as possible, divest themselves of their parochial character and assume the office and

responsibilities of local boards of health, to exercise all those important functions which were required not only for the protection of the parish poor but of the lives of the entire community.

Had the great majority of cases of cholera occurred among paupers, there would have been some show of reason for the parochial arrangement of relief being adopted; but it was very soon discovered that such was not the case, and the woful discrepancy which has everywhere been found to exist between the attacks and deaths occurring among pauper patients and the deaths in the Registrar's Report, shows that the force of the epidemic fell not on the paupers, but on the working classes and small tradesmen. It was no uncommon thing for the Registrar's Report to exhibit a mortality twice as great as the District Surgeon's Return; and in the city of Bristol, where an account was kept of the classes who suffered from the disease, it was found that out of 15,529 epidemic cases in all stages, not above one-fourth occurred among the paupers, the remaining three-fourths taking place among the independent working classes, who were thus thrown upon the parochial medical relief, with no other alternative than to take it as the law had provided, or run the risk of death. It is true that in many instances it was understood that the relief should be extended over as wide a basis as possible, and that the inquiries made as to the applicant should not be of a too particular nature; but it must be confessed that the very placing of any portion of our population, except actual paupers, under a system of pauper medical relief, appears to be a proceeding of so entirely an objectionable character, that nothing but the most pressing necessity could have justified its adoption. No convenience of existing machinery could make up for the mischiefs likely to accrue from it, or from the hardships to which it was likely to have exposed the applicants for relief. Whatever provision was contemplated for the protection of the lives of the working classes during a period of pestilence, ought certainly not to have been a pauper one.

The less obvious but no less injurious consequences which resulted from the arrangement were of the following kind:—With few exceptions, the usual, and under ordinary circumstances the necessary, spirit of a parochial *suspiciousness* pervaded the entire administration of the relief measures. I have frequently found an order for relief required before a dose of medicine could be obtained. At a period when a properly-constituted local Board of Health would probably have carried out relief measures on the widest and most liberal scale to save life, the *money-aspect* of the measures in certain instances appears to have occupied the largest share of attention. At a time when the self-sustaining heads of families were being cut off in all directions, the question appears to have been in these cases not how the largest saving of productive human life could be effected, but what was the smallest increase of rates which the parish could escape with? The kind of inquiries, which are natural to parochial bodies, occupied the chief place in their consideration; and hence the medical assistance provided has sometimes been very inadequate. I have walked through affected districts, and seen the people in terror running about in all directions, seeking for medical aid where none was to be found. I have entered houses, and seen the sick and the dying lying without help. In a

whole district of the metropolis the people were falling before the ravages of the epidemic, apparently without the knowledge that the Legislature had made any provision for their relief. In one town the medical staff was broken up and dismissed in the midst of a wasting pestilence, on account of some paltry pecuniary consideration, and numbers of families were thrown into mourning in consequence; the decisions of one meeting on matters of instant and vital importance having been upset by another meeting called by a cabal for the purpose. I know one case in which, on the very eve of one of the most disastrous outbursts of cholera I have ever witnessed, the medical staff was dismissed, and the dispensaries closed, and where hundreds died without being able to obtain a single dose of medicine.

Similar difficulties arose in the exercise of the power of providing houses of refuge by the parochial authorities. I have already shown the great saving of life which ensued in cases where the Boards willingly provided places of refuge, and the fatal results which must necessarily have followed neglect of the regulations in this important particular. The object and importance of these establishments had been so clearly pointed out in the notifications of the General Board of Health that the absolute necessity of them must have been apparent to the most cursory observation. On the part of some Boards there was often a great unwillingness to open refuges; and on the part of the people there was often as great an unwillingness to enter those which had been provided. I cannot help thinking that the workhouse idea influenced both parties. Indeed I have known a portion of a workhouse set apart for a refuge for persons who abhorred the very name of the place. A great deal of difficulty was often experienced in procuring suitable premises, on account of the violence of local prejudices. I know one instance in which a very successful house of refuge was obtained, in a parish adjoining the one affected; but the guardians of the former, instead of doing all they could to aid their neighbours in their endeavours to save life, tried every means in their power to prevent the house being applied to the contemplated purpose, because they would not allow the "paupers" of another parish to be sent into theirs, if they could help it! This was a case in which many lives had been lost for want of a refuge, and in which not a single case of cholera occurred among the large number of inmates who were afterwards drafted from affected houses into the refuge, when it was obtained.

It should not be forgotten that the house of refuge under the existing law must necessarily have been a kind of poorhouse. It had to be furnished, and the inmates provided with food, bedding, &c. It was natural, therefore, for the guardians to consider it in this light; but yet I have been in refuges where the great majority of the inmates were respectable working people. I have known the popular prejudice, as to the danger of contagion from persons coming out of infected districts, form an insurmountable obstacle to the obtaining of lodgings by working men able and willing to pay for the accommodation. It is hardly necessary to point out the hardship involved in giving working people so situated no other choice than to take refuge in a parish establishment. I have elsewhere mentioned the case of two parishes in which the great remedy required to save the people was their removal

from affected houses. In this case tents were sent for their relief, but the local committees would not put the necessary bedding into them. The people consequently would not use them, and died.

I am desirous of not being misunderstood in the object of these strictures. Any person at all conversant with parochial administration must be well aware of the great difficulties with which the Guardians of the poor have to contend. The parishes might have been left to manage their own sick poor; but the circumstance of requiring them to take charge of the health and lives of our entire working population was to introduce an element of antagonism which could not but be productive of mischief. I have also had complaints made to me of the pauperising tendency of the relief measures in the hands of parochial authorities; and it has been stated that it was found to be very difficult to make persons return to their usual independent habits who had received parish medical relief for the first time, perhaps, in their lives. The evil may be said to have come to a climax when it was found that the General Board of Health had no power to compel the parishes to obey its regulations, and that, in fact, no legal provisions for protecting the people were in existence.

I have endeavoured to do justice to those parishes which willingly carried out the preventive measures of their own accord; and I have shown that a great deal of human life was saved in all the towns by directing the local measures until they were in full operation. I must not be considered therefore as in the slightest degree undervaluing the importance of the great work which has been accomplished. It is possible also that many epidemic attacks may have been prevented by the preparatory measures of Boards of Guardians in parts of the country which did not come within the sphere of my own observations; but I should fail in my public duty if I did not express my decided conviction that many lives were lost which might have been saved, and that this calamity arose out of the very nature of the machinery employed.

Before concluding this section of the Report, I would bear the strongest testimony to the self-denying zeal and the ability with which the medical officers so nobly discharged the highly responsible duties confided to them during a time of great public emergency. The question of remuneration for services rendered by these officers, though not coming under the regulations, nevertheless arises out of the recommendation of the Board that they should be liberally dealt with on account of the heavy additional duties thrown on them. I know a number of instances in which a suitable payment has certainly been made; but the complaints of the miserable remuneration afforded have been so numerous that I question very much whether it would be wise to encounter another epidemic such as the last without other arrangements. I feel satisfied that, in the majority of instances which have come under my own observation, nothing but the dictates of humanity would induce the medical officers to undertake the work anew with the chances of being similarly paid for it.

I have thought it needful to mention these matters, because they have a most important bearing on the management of epidemics; and the whole experience of the late cholera ought to raise the question as to whether, considering the classes of society affected, and the nature of the case, it would not be desirable, in the event of

another attack, and in localities in which it might be deemed necessary, to place the local powers in the hands of a few intelligent and influential inhabitants, perhaps connected with parochial and other local Boards, nominated by Government *to do the special work of prevention*, and to carry out rigorously the relief measures of the General Board of Health; to undertake these duties for the safety of the people, not as a parochial function, but as a most important public trust, to be exercised for a present emergency, and for no other purpose; and to perform these duties only so long and no longer than the emergency required. In this way every objection on the part of the people to the *parish* aspect of the preventive measures would be done away with, the parochial authorities would be relieved from great difficulties, and an adequate extent of aid might be afforded without endangering the independence of the working classes in the laudable attempt at saving them from the ravages of pestilence.

SECTION VIII.

EXTRACT FROM REPORT, ON THE OUTBREAK OF CHOLERA ON BOARD THE AMERICAN SHIP "AMERICAN EAGLE."

THE circumstances connected with the outbreak of Asiatic cholera on board the emigrant ship "American Eagle" appear to me to afford strong proof of the necessity for substituting a system of well-arranged sanitary regulations for preventing, as far as possible, the localization of epidemics on board merchant vessels, instead of the expensive, inefficient, and dangerous system of quarantine now in use. Besides the saving of sickness and life, this case presents an example of the greater saving of time, or, in other words, of money, by the substitution of sanitary for quarantine regulations.

A large vessel which, in an ordinary season, might possibly have carried its crew and passengers across the Atlantic in safety, is laid in dock, close to an epidemic locality (which, moreover, ought to have had no existence there). The stagnant water of the dock leaks into the vessel, and becomes offensive; the ventilation is very defective; an overcrowded population of emigrants is placed on board; their food is unwholesome, and the personal habits of many of them filthy. Possibly all these circumstances might have been inoperative in ordinary seasons; but, during a prevailing epidemic constitution, they become matters of immense importance. Cholera strikes the ship, just as I have seen it again and again strike a similarly circumstanced locality on shore, although few places on land have been altogether so badly situated as this ship has been. The plan of procedure on land is to spread the population, by taking them out of the infected localities. This is absolutely necessary to their safety; while those who are removed, and all in the neighbourhood, are placed under strict medical inspection. Every needful sanitary precaution in the way of cleansing, ventilation, &c., is also enforced. But suppose the "American Eagle"

had arrived in England from a foreign port. If there had been no cholera here; she would have been put in quarantine; her overcrowded population kept in her. No system of medical inspection, or sanitary amendment, would have been possible. I am warranted in stating, from experience in similar cases on shore, that a large proportion of the crew and passengers would have perished in a very short time under such treatment.

Every person of common sense must recognise that the methods adopted at Plymouth in the case of the vessel in question were infinitely superior to such a barbarous expedient as leaving a large number of our fellow-creatures to perish, under circumstances in which death comes in one of its most fearful aspects, and beset with more than ordinary terrors. Had proper care been taken to preserve the neighbourhood of the docks in a proper sanitary state, we have every reason, from experience, to believe that an epidemic centre would not have existed there; and had the requisite precautions been taken on board of the "American Eagle," it is equally certain that the crew and passengers would have escaped cholera. But after the neglect has been committed, and the consequences have shown themselves, it is surely a mark of ignorance as well as of inhumanity to subject the sufferers and their friends and fellow-passengers to all the dangers and horrors of a pest ship, in order to ward off some imaginary danger from people at the port where the vessel arrives.

The present case illustrates forcibly the origin of presumed instances of importation of the disease. Should cholera break out in Plymouth or its neighbourhood, a presumption of *importation* might be advanced; and in after years, when all the circumstances are forgotten, the arrival of the "American Eagle" at Plymouth, the dispersion of the passengers, and the appearance of cholera in the town, would, no doubt, be placed in the relation of cause and effect in the narrative; but let it be remembered that cholera had shown itself in the neighbourhood of Plymouth *before the arrival of the ship*, and that a man, who had actually been in Plymouth, had died of the disease.

The case of the "American Eagle" further shows the importance of preventing the sailing of an emigrant ship, or any other vessel, when cholera has broken out on board. Had this vessel put to sea with her depressed and overcrowded population, a large sacrifice of human life would have been inevitable. The greater purity of the air at sea, and the getting out of the epidemic atmosphere, which the ship by sailing might, perhaps, soon do, may appear at first view to be reasons for her putting to sea with all possible despatch. But this view is a fallacious one, and, if acted on, would involve the certain destruction of numerous persons. Every man, woman, and child, under the circumstances which are here supposed, has been breathing a poisoned atmosphere. That some portion of the poison is already in the system of many of them, and has taken hold of them, is unequivocally shown by the prevalence of the premonitory diarrhoea. To the full development of the disease in every one of those persons nothing is wanting but favourable conditions. Such conditions are combined and concentrated in the intensest degree conceivable in an emigrant ship at sea under the circumstances supposed;—all more or less predisposed to disease; the disease actually existing in some; filth, overcrowding, imperfect ven-