

FIFTH NOTIFICATION IN RESPECT TO THE NUISANCE REMOVAL AND CONTAGIOUS DISEASES' PREVENTION ACT.

*General Board of Health, Gwydyr House,
August 17, 1849.*

The prevalence of Asiatic Cholera in the Metropolis, and in England generally, up to June, was limited to comparatively few localities, beyond which it did not spread; but its outbreak, wherever it appeared, was generally violent, the proportion of the deaths to the attacks being very great; and in some instances, as in the establishment at Tooting, in several lunatic asylums, and in some workhouses and prisons, the numbers seized were so large as to indicate a true epidemic tendency. In other countries, though it appears that the pestilence has created less alarm, it has spread more extensively, and been more fatal than on its former visitation; and since the middle of June its progress in England and Wales has proved, that here also, the epidemic force is greater than it was in 1832.

Notwithstanding the representations addressed to the local authorities charged with carrying out the Regulations made under the authority of the Legislature for preventing the localization and spread of epidemic diseases, that the seats and subjects of cholera, and the seats and subjects of typhus are generally the same, in almost every instance where attacks have been made in groups of cases, it has been found that the preventive measures enjoined by the General Board of Health in November last had not been commenced until after the actual outbreak of the disease.

Yet, had the preventive measures, founded on the provisions of the Nuisances' Removal and the Diseases' Prevention Act, been carried into effect without delay, and to the greatest practicable extent, there would still have remained in many localities sanitary evils of the greatest magnitude, wholly irremovable under this Act, and for which the only remedy is the Public Health Act. In the instances, however, in which the cleansings, the removal of nuisances, and the other preventive measures authorized and required by the former Act have been enforced, the results have been proportionately beneficial.

Wherever the disease has spread extensively through any district, or has been localized in a court or street, or has appeared in groups in the same dwelling, the Inspectors, on examining the locality, have uniformly reported the existence of filth, bad ventilation, over-crowding, and other local causes of atmospheric impurity.

And whenever, by intelligence and energy, these localizing conditions have been changed, particularly when, under the direction of an Inspector, the further regulations enjoining the special preventive measures of house to house visitation, and immediate treatment of the premonitory symptoms, have been faithfully carried out, the pestilence has been checked, and in some instances it has been abruptly and finally terminated in the course of a few days; but, on the other hand, in several instances when, after the departure of the Inspector, the house to house visitation has been suspended, and when, consequently, the early detection and treatment of the premonitory cases have been no longer possible, the disease has again broken out with renewed force.

From the report of the General Board of Health recently presented, "On the measures adopted for the execution of the Nuisances' Removal and Diseases' Prevention Act, and the Public Health Act, up to July 1849," it appears that bad

sanitary conditions have in numerous instances localized the epidemic to such an extent that alike in cities, towns, and villages, almost the entire population have been simultaneously affected with the premonitory symptoms of the disease. In these instances, until the house to house visitation has been systematically and energetically carried out, great numbers of the premonitory cases have continued to pass into the developed and fatal stage; but as soon as by this agency the disease has been detected where it was secretly forming, and has been immediately placed under treatment, its progress has been arrested, so that it has seldom gone on to developed cholera. Thus, in one instance, out of 13,089 premonitory cases discovered by the system of house to house visitation, and reported as having been placed under treatment, only 80 are stated to have passed into cholera. In another instance not a single death occurred out of 1,380 cases of premonitory diarrhoea brought under early treatment; but when diarrhoea has been neglected until vomiting has come on, the mortality has risen to 7 per cent, and has increased progressively, according to the length of delay, to 39 per cent; while in instances in which it has not been brought under treatment until the evacuations have become serious, and have been accompanied with cramps, 53 persons have died out of every 100; facts which, it has been justly stated, establish the unity of the disease and its progressive danger.

There is indeed undoubted evidence that occasionally individuals are attacked quite suddenly, without any previous warning; but this almost always occurs only on the first outbreak of the disease in a locality, and happens chiefly to those who are living under peculiarly bad sanitary conditions, or are of intemperate habits. In the great majority of instances distinct warning of the approach of the disease, in time for the adoption of effectual remedies, is given.

Proceeding on these results of experience, the General Board of Health have deemed it their duty to enforce, as far as was within their power, the observance of the Regulation enjoining house to house visitation, satisfied that it is the means of saving life, and that the cost of carrying it into effect is incomparably less than that which must otherwise be incurred for the mitigation of sickness, and the support of the permanent pauperism occasioned by orphanage and widowhood.

There are, however, houses and localities in which the predisposing and localizing conditions exist in such intensity, that until their sanitary state is wholly changed, no measures will succeed in preventing the development of the disease. In these cases the only remedy is the dispersion of the inhabitants, and the removal of the destitute to houses of refuge, until their own abodes are cleansed and purified according to Regulation No. XV, issued in November last.

Seeing the continued progress of the disease, and its extension to numerous new localities which appear to have escaped during the visitation of 1832, the General Board of Health again earnestly repeat the cautions given in their First and Second Notifications, with reference to diet, clothing, and the general means of maintaining health and vigour. For reasons already fully stated, the articles of food, where there are the means of choice, should be solid, nutritious, invigorating, and concentrated, tending to maintain moderately costive bowels, a state which experience has shown to be more conducive to exemption from cholera than an opposite habit. Great care and due moderation in