

THE BIRTHPLACE OF CHOLERA.

THE only countries upon the globe to which cholera has not been carried are the islands of the South Pacific, Australasia, the Cape of Good Hope, the islands of the North Atlantic, and the western coast of America. These localities are all separated from India by a wide expanse of ocean, and have no commercial intercourse with that country.

Cholera has not become permanent outside of India, although it is seldom absent from some of the provinces of Hindustan. From its birthplace in the delta of the Ganges, the disease has effected a permanent lodgment in the province of Bengal, Madras and Bombay, while in the provinces that lie to the west and northwest, such as Rappootana and Punjab, it occurs only as an epidemic, developing after great religious gatherings.

Hurdwar, in the Punjab, at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains, is the great nursery of cholera. It never originates there, but has annually been developed there during the great Hindoo festivals. Of these festivals Hurdwar is cursed with two, and they draw together a great concourse of people from every portion of the Indian empire. At some of these festivals as many as 3,000,000 devotees have assembled, but of late years the numbers have fallen off. Hurdwar having lost its sacred prestige from the fact that some of the holy waters of the Ganges have been profanely diverted into a canal constructed by English authorities.

There immense numbers of human beings gather upon a bare, sandy plain on the banks of the Ganges, massed like herds of swine, without means of sanitary protection. The earth and air, as well as the water, are polluted, and the odor from the camps is perceptible for many miles. Day and night the devotees pour through the great thoroughfares of the country to and from the festival in parties of from 10 to 500, following so closely as to make an almost continuous procession. Ninety-five out of every 100 are on foot, but occasionally some great nabob sweeps past with an enormous retinue, or a rajah with his caravan of elephants, camels, horse men, and swordsmen passes in all the grandeur and confusion of Indian royalty. They ride over the poor wretches who line the roads, trample them down, and hurl imprecations upon them for blocking the way. Some march hundreds and some thousands of miles to engage in the festivals and to bathe in the sacred river. Many die on the way, and all arrive lame and gaunt from hunger and fatigue, with feet bound up in rags and their scanty clothing covered with blood and dust. They rush into the river as soon as they arrive, and drink the water as fast as they can scoop it up in their hands.

They are fed from the Temple kitchen, where as many as 90,000 cooks are at work, and the food is distributed among them in a rude way. When fresh it is not unwholesome, but too much of it produces indigestion and great sufferings. The half-starved pilgrims, as it like gluttons, rush into the water again to bathe and drink, the result is derangement of the digestive organs. When they have eaten their fill, whatever food is left is preserved. Under the hot sun it soon becomes so poisonous to the pilgrims who eat it.

In these hotbeds of disease, under conditions that would breed a plague anywhere, these pilgrims live. The heat is almost unendurable. The living, the sick, and the dying are huddled together, with only just as much space as they can cover lying down. As fast as they die they are buried in the sand.

But on the return journey the misery of the pilgrims reaches its height. They are sick and lame, but stagger along until the weak fall by the roadside to die. Their bodies lie thickly along the journey uncovered. Some drag their weary limbs until they reach a village, where they drop and lie in masses, blocking up the streets, until they get strong enough to move forward, or die of starvation and disease.

It is impossible to calculate the number that perish. The Bishop of Calcutta estimates it at about one in five, and those who do not die on the journey carry the germs of disease home with them, scattering pestilence along their path. Thus the cholera is started on its periodic march around the world. No great Asiatic pestilence has ever scourged the East and allowed the cities of Arabia to escape. The pilgrims to Mecca and the commercial caravans to Damascus carry death in their train under any quarantine that can be devised, but the attempts to establish quarantine are weak, ineffectual and spasmodic.

The Holy City of Mecca is another great distributing point for cholera; in fact, it is a sort of clearing house for all sorts of infectious diseases. In 1865, it is said 20,000 pilgrims died there of cholera in six days, and the city for centuries has been the focus of plagues, which have been brought from all directions, and thence distributed by returning pilgrims over three continents.

For many centuries there has been an incessant stream of pilgrims to and from Mecca. To be present at the Kourban Baram is the great aim and end of Mohammedan life, and to reach there hundreds of thousands abandon homes and property, and undertake perilous and exhausting journeys. From the North Atlantic and Mediterranean shores of Africa, from Timbuctoo and Western Africa, from Siberia, from the Danube and the Sea of Azov, from the Western provinces of China, from the cities of Europe, and from the most remote Mohammedan settlements, constant processions of pilgrims are passing to and from Mecca; for this pilgrimage, at least once in a lifetime, is binding on all true Mohammedans, and he who dies without having made it might as well have been a Jew, Christian, or a dog.

The return of one pilgrimage is never accomplished from any of the larger settlements before another is on the move. They arrive in great caravans, and the misery and hardships they endure are equal to those suffered by the Hindu devotees. Some come by sea to Jedda upon the native vessels, which are saturated with infectious poisons. Each passenger receives only sufficient space to squat upon. The intense heat of the day, the miasmas of the night, privations of all sorts, the want of sleep and food and exercise induce a physical condition but little short of death. Many die on board the vessels, but

the most have strength enough left to drag themselves to the Holy City. Those who go by land and on foot suffer even worse.

Having arrived at Mecca without rest or food, the pilgrims enter at once upon their religious duties. The first is to visit the Kaaba, the Holy Temple, and the tomb of Ishmael, upon which rests the stone let down from heaven. Upon the arrival at the Kaaba all drink and perform their ablutions in the well of Zem Zem.

The water is tepid, salty, and milkish in colour. It might have been pure once, but it has not been so in centuries. No pilgrim ever quits Mecca without carrying a jar of this water away with him, and it is impossible to over-estimate the potency of the Zem Zem spring in spreading cholera and other diseases.

In Mecca all the essentials for an epidemic are constantly gathered, as well as the means for distributing the germs of disease broadcast. The pilgrimages in India and Arabia have received the attention of sanitarians for several years, but no means has yet been found, so strong is the religious sense, to prevent the dissemination of disease by them.

The present epidemic in France can be traced from Hurdwar to Mecca, from Mecca to Egypt, and thence along the Mediterranean to Toulon and Marseilles.—Exchange.

THE MAAMTRASNA ENQUIRY.

(The Nation, August 30.)

EARL SPENCER and his advisers may flatter themselves, and their admirers in the Press may pretend to their hearts' content, that the official reply to the letter of the Archbishop of Tuam on the grim Maamtrasna business is conclusive of the question raised by his Grace's communication; but his Excellency will do well not to take for granted that the Castle view of the matter is that which finds general acceptance in the country. His memorandum may, in his opinion and in that of his friends, be enough to clear himself and Crown Solicitor Bolton of the charges made against them; but we have no hesitation in saying that that document, in the opinion of nine out of every ten persons in Ireland who have read it, solves no difficulty whatever, and suggests nothing but that the Castle Ring are afraid to face the open, public inquiry which has been demanded by the voice of the Irish public, and which, it has been understood, was promised by the Marquis of Hartington in the House of Commons before the prorogation. In fact, in one respect, as we shall presently show, it marks with a more decided brand of condemnation the refusal of Lord Spencer to give a favourable answer to the many appeals made to him to commute the sentence passed upon Myles Joyce and executed under the horrible circumstances that are still so fresh in general recollection.

Lord Spencer apparently fails to see, if he does not deliberately ignore, what really he has been called upon to do in this case. He thinks, or pretends to think, that if he satisfies himself and the other leading authorities in the Castle that Myles Joyce was rightly hung, and that the incomparable Bolton did nothing in his dealings with the Maamtrasna informers that was not perfectly proper, nothing now remains to be accomplished. Acting on this comfortable theory, he proceeds to hold a secret inquiry in the Castle, calling to his aid Bolton and other Crown officials; and then, after due deliberation, he emphatically acquits himself and Bolton of all blame, giving at the same time a lengthened and plausible *resumé* of his reasons! But this is not what was wanted. Lord Spencer had to satisfy not himself at all so much as the public, and this achievement could not possibly have been accomplished by a secret inquiry in the Castle presided over by the man who signed the warrant for Joyce's execution, and attended by none but his own official witnesses. As well set a gang of men charged with murder to investigate the question of their guilt or innocence, and expect that their verdict of acquittal would win general respect. One story is good till another is told. The Castle memorandum is a cogent argument, but the tens of thousands who regard Earl Spencer and George Bolton as being virtually in the dock would be more likely to be convinced by it if the value of the statements it contains had been sifted by a searching cross-examination conducted in public and presided over by an independent tribunal.

The point on which it seems to us Lord Spencer has made matters worse for himself by his memorandum now comes into notice. Since Myles Joyce was executed the report that the two men who were hanged with him declared, just before they passed into eternity, that he was innocent has been generally current, but the fact of that declaration having been made is now for the first time officially acknowledged. That is to say, the Lord Lieutenant now at last admits that he refused to commute the sentence on Myles Joyce in face of what would have induced most persons to have at least some doubt as to the correctness of the verdict in his case. A terribly serious admission; and it is not rendered less serious by the defence which Lord Spencer in his memorandum sets up for his "firmness." He seems to reconcile the dying statements of Joyce and his fellows with the verdict by assuming that what those statements meant was that Joyce was not one of those who actually took part in the horrible butchery of Maamtrasna; and on this point he observes that all who went on the mission of murder, and not merely those who actually struck the fatal blows or fired the fatal shots, are morally and legally guilty. But was it or is it even yet certain that, if Myles Joyce was one of the Maamtrasna murder party, and was not one of the actual murderers, he was conscious of the nature of the mission on which his associates were bent? It is impossible to answer this question in the affirmative in the face of the informers' story that the majority of the party did not know for what they were led along by their two leaders; and thus it is clear that, though the legal liability of Myles Joyce under the circumstances supposed was undoubtedly, his moral liability did not exist, and to carry out, therefore, in his case an irrevocable sentence was an act from which most men of conscience and of ordinary powers of discrimination would have shrunk in horror.