

While it is satisfactory to state that a great and growing number of local authorities now manifest an earnest desire to carry into effect every practicable means of prevention, there are some who show the same reluctance as formerly to admit the plainest facts evidencing the near approach of an outbreak. Instead of preparing to meet the danger, they shut their eyes against it. Cases of diarrhoea occurring in unusual intensity, in unusual numbers, and at an unusual season, they regard as of no real significance. Successive deaths, with the symptoms of malignant cholera, they call deaths from English Cholera, as if changing the name altered the evil. They suppress as far and as long as possible the knowledge of all local forewarnings, whence a false security is maintained, which, on the outbreak of the pestilence, gives place to panic. On the arrival of one of the Board's medical inspectors, who under such circumstances is usually sent for, he finds the Union medical offices distracted with the sudden demands made upon them—demands greater than they could possibly satisfy were they to devote day and night to the service, which indeed many of them do to the peril and some to the loss of their own lives. Thus occupied with the treatment of cases, they are wholly unable to devise, organise, and superintend measures for preventing the spread of the pestilence among the population as yet unattacked. Additional medical assistance has now to be sought from a distance; properly qualified house to house visitors to perform the service of bringing the premonitory cases under immediate treatment, are to be obtained; houses of refuge are to be procured; dispensaries are to be opened; in short, the whole preventive system has to be organised, and before these arrangements can be made, which ought to have been completed before a single case of the disease occurred, the pestilence is at its height.

One consequence of this neglect of the proper period of preparation is, that in the actual presence of the epidemic, some of the most powerful predisposing causes of the disease cannot be removed without the risk of increasing the evils intended to be remedied. Cleansing operations, which at all times require caution, are then hurriedly and precipitately resorted to, and are sometimes performed in such a manner as to produce positive aggravation of the disease. In some instances cesspool matter has been discharged even into the kennels of the streets, and the contents of foul ditches, in a state to give off poisonous exhalations, on the slightest agitation, have been spread on the banks close to habitations. The Board deem it necessary again to caution local authorities against such a culpable mode of proceeding, which even in ordinary seasons would be attended with imminent danger; but that danger is greatly increased at an epidemic period. Though accumulations of filth may be removed with perfect safety, with the proper use of disinfecting substances, and under the superintendence of persons of competent knowledge, yet in an epidemic season the emanations from decomposing animal and vegetable matter acquire so much potency that, at that time, it is better to leave large collections of foul refuse undisturbed, and to cover them temporarily with layers of quicklime or of fresh earth.

Wherever it has not been already done, an efficient scavenging staff should be immediately organized and kept in unremitting action. The mortality from the epidemic in towns well scavenged has in some instances been only one half of that in ill scavenged towns, both being in other respects in similarly imperfect sanitary conditions.

It is sometimes observed, as a ground for in-

action, that extraordinary epidemics merely take the place of ordinary epidemics, and only destroy in a shorter space of time those who would have perished probably within the year, by some form of zymotic disease.

But even if this were true, it cannot be too strongly impressed on local authorities that ordinary epidemics, which may take the place of an extraordinary epidemic, are themselves preventible and are in great measure prevented by proper sanitary arrangements; as is seen in the comparative immunity from these diseases among the inmates of well-managed Union houses and prisons, of well-regulated lodging-houses, and of improved dwellings for the labouring classes. If, therefore, from the favourable state of the weather, or from some unknown cause, the disease should return only with diminished force, or should not recur at all as a general epidemic, no properly directed effort can fail to be of benefit, equivalent to the expense incurred. It should not require the occurrence of an extraordinary disease, terrifying the imagination by the suddenness of its attack and the rapidity of its course, to call forth such efforts: they are called for by ordinary epidemics, which, though less alarming as being always present, are for that very reason far more mortal than any extraordinary epidemic.

It is however so far from being true that an extraordinary epidemic does not increase the average mortality, that it sometimes swells that mortality nearly by the whole number of persons who perish by it. This was the case, to a considerable extent, in the epidemic of 1849. Out of its 72,000 victims, 40,000 were added to the mortality of that year. Judging from past experience, there is no reasonable ground to hope that a similar loss of life will not take place in the approaching summer, unless timely exertions are made to prevent the calamity, and it is *now* only that *timely* exertion can be made. It is at the present juncture, that the extraordinary powers conferred by the Order in Council for enforcing external and internal cleansing, and for the removal of nuisances, should be exercised with the utmost activity, vigilance and stringency.

Nor should it be forgotten, that within the time of preparation which may yet be allowed us, in the actual condition of great numbers of places in all our towns, it is only palliatives that can be applied. Where there is no drainage, no proper water supply, no water-closets, nothing but foul cesspools, only limited benefits can be expected.

For this reason the Board would urge on Local Boards of Health, whose works under the Public Health Act are the most advanced, the great importance of hastening on the completion of such operations as are necessary for the abolition of cesspools, and the substitution of the water-closet apparatus; by laying down wherever possible, especially in epidemic districts and localities, impermeable and self-cleansing house drains, and by providing ample supplies of water. Hitherto, almost exclusive attention has been given to the construction of main sewers, but experience has shown that these alone, without systematized connexion with self-cleansing house-drains and ample supplies of water, are of little avail in the prevention of disease; but that where foul cesspools have been the principal sanitary evil, as from house to house these have been filled up, and the water-closet substituted, the outbreak and spread of fever and other forms of zymotic disease have been at once arrested.

At the same time that these works are proceeded with, the damp and miry surface in front and at the back of houses should be removed by paving.