

SANITARY IMPROVEMENT IN VILLAGES.

By MAJOR KUKDAY I. M. S.

THAT improvement of sanitation is one of the pressing needs of the country is by now universally recognized. Most of the important Municipalities have engaged special sanitary officers, and large sums are expended in improving the water supply and drainage, disposal of refuse and housing of the poor. Wherever large bodies of men are employed as labourers as in factories, or collect together temporarily as at fairs, Government insists on satisfactory sanitary arrangements being made for them. Comparatively little is however done in the villages or small towns where the bulk of the people reside. It is therefore felt that if private individuals or philanthropic societies could be induced to take up this work in villages and small towns, instead of waiting for ideas of sanitation to filter down from the large cities in the natural course of events, the progress of sanitation in the country would be materially hastened.

It does not take long to find out what the insanitary conditions in a village are. A casual walk through some of them brings them into view at once. Drinking water is generally obtained from wells mostly built by the Local Boards. These wells are well built and ought to be quite safe, but people wash and bathe right at the mouth of the well and thus expose the water to contamination from above, as well as by soakage. When drinking water is derived from tanks or streams, no precautions are taken to prevent men or cattle from polluting it. Of drainage of course there is none. All water used for domestic purposes soaks or collects on the spot forming dirty pools. Cattle, the most valuable possession of the cultivator, are stabled in their very dwelling houses and manure is stored in the court-yards. The streets are hardly ever swept and children are noticed polluting the soil and air anywhere and everywhere. Personal hygiene is fair but still admits of considerable improvement. In case of illness, relief is first sought through the village deities and then through some quack. If the patient still survives, they may go to the nearest hospital. Segregation or disinfection in case of infectious diseases is quite unknown and nursing the sick is as primitive as it possibly could be. Some of the larger villages have specially built school-houses, but in the majority of them the school—many of them have no school at all—is located in ordinary private houses hardly suitable for the purpose.

As a matter of fact the conditions of village life are more favourable for the maintenance of general cleanliness than those in large towns. Water is obtainable on the spot and is generally plentiful. The neighbouring fields afford excellent facilities for the disposal of refuse. There

need be no overcrowding and houses could be commodious and streets spacious. The occupation of the cultivators keeps them out of doors for the greater portion of the day and thus they get the full benefit of light and free air; nor have they generally any vices that would act prejudicially on their health. In spite of this, our villages are scarcely clean and the villagers hardly types of health and vigour.

Ignorance and poverty appear to be the most important causes. As a class cultivators are completely illiterate and cannot therefore add to their knowledge by reading. Their ordinary works and limited wants keep them within the narrow limits of their village and so they cannot imbibe new ideas by personal observation. Their conservatism makes them suspicious of change or innovation. Added to these, their poverty prevents them from availing themselves of expensive sanitary projects or costly qualified medical relief.

The remedy would naturally lie in removal of the causes. People could co-operate with Government in improving schools where they exist and opening new ones where they do not. Night classes will have to be opened for those who cannot attend schools during the day and rewards might be given to induce attendance at schools and encourage cleanliness. Suitable literature on sanitary subjects should be distributed free among the people. The advantages of cleanliness and the dangers of insanitation must be impressed on the people by constant precept and personal example of the worker. Special demonstrations on sanitary subjects should be held at fairs and festivals when the people collect in large numbers. As far as funds permit, assistance should be given towards building sanitary dwellings and maintaining cleanliness. In doing all this, the importance of the personal factor must be carefully noted. The work is to be done among people deeply ignorant and intensely conservative. Beliefs, habits and customs handed down from ages have to be altered. The worker, he or she must win the confidence of the people and secure the sympathy of not only men but of the women-folk as well. They must find in him or her a friend and a sympathizer. The workers therefore must take up the work largely as a labour of love, though they may also be paid as funds permit. Experience shows that nothing attracts the sympathies of the people as timely medical help and the most suitable workers would be medical men or men from the Educational Department trained in simple medical subjects.

For a long time work will have to be done under discouraging circumstances, money spent apparently without effect, but success is sure to follow if suitable workers are secured and persevering efforts made.

One of the societies working in this direction was started in Bombay about a year ago under the name of Miss Nightingale Village

Sanitation Association, a nucleus for funds having been provided by that philanthropic lady. The society has started work for the present in two places. As funds permit, the society intends to extend the sphere of its operations. Let us hope the people will encourage the efforts of the society by helping it with funds and volunteering personal services. Any one interested in the work may get the necessary information from the society's offices at 89, Apollo Street, Fort, Bombay, or from Major Kukday, I. M. S., Civil Surgeon, Thana, who is a member of the Committee of that association.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MEDICINE,

By Miss E. TURNER WATTS, M. D., B. S., (LONDON).

THE recent assembly in London of 7,000 Doctors representing all civilized countries, will doubtless be reckoned an event of far-reaching importance to humanity by the astute historian of this decade. The newspapers have given to it a publicity hitherto unknown to the debates of such a scientific company. We may claim for it an Imperial and an International significance. Imperial, since not England alone, but her Overseas Dominions also, combined to greet delegates from many lands; International, since here in a wonderful way the barriers of race were broken down. Are the men of science to lead in the coming "Parliament of man," "brotherhood of nations, the Federation of the world."

The official welcome to the delegates was voiced by Prince Arthur of Connaught, representing the King, followed by Lord Morley and Sir Edward Grey.

The last Congress held in London was 32 years ago—years marked by wonderful progress in the fight against disease. Then Pasteur was the distinguished guest, the hero whose experiments led on to the discovery by Lister of the principles of modern antisepsis and a revolution in surgery.

The President, Sir Thomas Barlow, "a veritable Knight of Medicine in robes of black and gold," in his introductory address welcomed the co-ordination by Governments of Medicine in all concerning public health and social improvement. "Medicine is one great portion of the growth of the practical science of living, and its advance concerns every single human being on this planet." "Again, incurable disease is invaded on every side, and the danger of operation, *qua* operation, is retreating to a vanishing point. I venture to foretell that, not many years hence, every department of life and work shall be strengthened and purified and brightened by its genial and penetrating influence."

Professor Harvey Cushing of Harvard dwelt on the transformation of the science of medicine in 30 years. As small-pox disappeared after