

insisted on. It is to be remembered, however, that in proportion as a district is habitually well cared for by its Sanitary Authorities, the more formidable emergencies of epidemic disease are not likely to arise in it.

18. For detailed advice on Disinfection, see the Office Memorandum on that subject.

JOHN SIMON.

Medical Department of the Council Office, July, 1866.

MEMORANDUM, by the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, on the Precautions to be taken against Cholera, under the Regulations recently issued by the Lords of the Council, and otherwise.

*Diseases Prevention Act put in force.*

1. Asiatic Cholera, which for more than a year past has again been affecting in succession many parts of continental Europe, has recently shown some disposition to spread in a few parts of England. It is probable that henceforth, for some weeks or months to come, the disease will be seen, in more or less considerable groups of cases, in other parts of this country. It is possible that in some such parts, amid pre-disposing conditions, the disease may suddenly become of great local importance. And under these circumstances the Lords of Her Majesty's Council have seen fit (by Order dated July 14th) to put in force the provisions of the Diseases Prevention Act, 1855.

*Medical Relief Regulations issued.*

2. Also their Lordships have seen fit to issue Regulations under the Act. Those Regulations (contained in two Orders of Council, dated respectively the 20th and the 21st July) direct the appointed local authorities to do in their respective districts, so far as necessary, certain things which are chiefly of the nature of Medical Relief. The Authorities who have to give effect to those Medical Relief Regulations are as follows:—First, within the Metropolis, with exception of the City of London, the respective Vestries or District Boards of the several Parishes or Districts; secondly, outside the Metropolis, and also in the three Unions of the City of London, the Boards of Guardians or Overseers of the Poor of the several Unions, Parishes, and places respectively. The main objects for which the Regulations purport to provide are briefly, and in the words of the Statute, as follows:—"for the speedy interment of the dead; for house to house visitation; for the dispensing of medicines, guarding against the spread of disease, and affording to persons afflicted by or threatened with such epidemic, endemic or contagious diseases, such medical aid and such accommodation as may be required." In order that these objects should be promptly and adequately fulfilled in any District where Cholera may show itself, it is necessary that all Authorities who will be responsible for fulfilling them should betimes, in their respective Districts, pre-consider and pre-arrange the measures which, in case of need, are to be taken. Therefore the Regulations require, that in all cases (not only in cases where Cholera is actually present within the jurisdiction) an immediate meeting of the Authority shall be held, and certain preparatory directions be given. But, except to this extent, no action under the Diseases Prevention Act is required of any District, unless Cholera be actually present there.

*Removal of Nuisances.*

3. There are other respects, however, in which local action has to be taken against Cholera, and in which the interests of the public health require, above everything, that the action should be taken from beforehand. This precautionary action against Cholera (as against many other diseases) is an object for which the Nuisances Removal Acts enable local provision to be made. The Authorities who have to administer these Acts are in many places the same, but in many other places (chiefly wherever there are Town Councils, Improvement Commissioners, or Local Boards of Health) are not the same, as the Authorities who have to act under the Medical Relief Regulations. The Lords of the Council have no authority to issue regulations or orders for any purposes of the Nuisances Removal Acts. But a year ago, in anticipation of the danger which now threatens the country, their Lordships drew the attention of Nuisance Authorities, and of the public generally, to the renewed presence of Asiatic Cholera in Europe, and suggested the precautionary

proceedings which under the circumstances were called for. It was their Lordships' hope, that, after this warning, the interval which might elapse before a re-appearance of Cholera in England would be vigorously used by the Nuisance Authorities of the country in preparing their respective Districts for the contingency which has now come. The paper which was circulated on the above occasion by the Lords of the Council (the "General Memorandum, on the proceedings which are advisable in places attacked or threatened by epidemic disease.") is now again commended by their Lordships to the consideration of Nuisance Authorities and of the public. And, on the present occasion, parts of it must be specially insisted on.

*Nuisances specially relative to Cholera.*

4. In relation to Asiatic Cholera, as now threatening us, there are two principal dangers against which extreme and exceptional vigilance ought to be used. First, there is the danger of drinking water which is in any (even the slightest) degree tainted by house-refuse or other like kinds of filth; as where there is out-flow, leakage or filtration, from sewers, house-drains, privies, cesspools, foul ditches, or the like, into streams, springs, or wells, from which the supply of water is drawn, or into the sub-soil in which the wells are situate; a danger which may exist on a small scale, as at the pump or dip-well of a private house, or on a large scale as in the sources of supply of public water-works. And secondly, there is the danger of breathing air which is made foul with effluvia from the same sorts of impurity. Information as to the high degree in which those two dangers affect the public health in ordinary times, and as to the extreme degree of importance which attaches to them at times when any diarrhoeal disease is epidemic, has now for so many years been set before the public, by this Department and otherwise, that the larger works of drainage and water-supply by which the dangers are permanently obviated for large populations, and also the minor structural improvements by which separate households are secured against the dangers, ought long ago to have come into universal use.—It is to be feared that on a very large scale this wiser course has not been adopted, and that even yet, in very many instances, temporary security has to be found in measures of a palliative kind. So far as such is the case, attention is most earnestly called to those parts of the General Memorandum which relates to the matters in hand. All chief sources of the one danger may be held in check, as follows:—By immediate thorough removal of every sort of house-refuse and other filth which is now accumulated; by preventing future accumulations of the same sort; by attention to all defects of house-drains and sinks through which offensive smells are let into houses; by thorough washing and lime-whiting of uncleanly premises, especially of such as are densely occupied; and by disinfection, very freely and frequently employed, in and round about houses, wherever there are receptacles or conduits of filth, wherever there is filth-sodden porous earth, wherever any thing else, in, or under, or about the house, tends to make the atmosphere foul. As provision against the other danger, it is essential that immediate and searching examination of sources of water-supply should be made in all cases where the source is in any degree open to the suspicion of impurity; examination both of private and of public supplies; and that where pollution is discovered, everything practicable should be done to prevent the pollution from continuing, or if this object cannot be attained, to prevent the water from being drunk. The examination of sources of water-supply should of course extend to all receptacles of water-storage, such as the tanks and reservoirs of public supply, and the butts and cisterns of private houses.\*

\* If unfortunately the only water which for a time can be got should be open to suspicion of dangerous organic impurity, it ought at least to be boiled before it is used for drinking, but then not to be drunk later than twenty four hours after it has been boiled. Or, under medical or other skilled direction, water, in quantities sufficient for one day's drinking in the house may be disinfected by a very careful use of Condly's red disinfectant fluid. This should be added to the water (with stirring or shaking) in such number of drops that the water, an hour afterwards, shall have the faintest pink colour which the eye can distinctly perceive. Filtering of the ordinary kind cannot by itself be trusted to purify water, but is a good addition to either of the above processes. It cannot be too distinctly understood, that dangerous qualities of water are not obviated by the addition of wine or spirits.