PLAGUE IN SAN FRANCISCO.

The summary of the plague situation in San Francisco, to and including August 18, is as follows: On June 14, Surgeon Kinyoun reported that from March 7 till June 2 there had been in San Francisco 11 deaths from plague, in 10 of which the diagnosis was confirmed by bacteriological investigation. There were at that time three cases of plague under observation, one of which he was positive was genuine, and which bacteriological investigation conclusively proved to be genuine. July 7, another fatal case was reported as having been admitted to the city hospital under the diagnosis of typhoid fever. Cultures from the case have not been received from the board of health of San Francisco, the State Board of Health of California, and the quarantine officer of Victoria, B. C. On August 18 one more case was discovered, in which the microscopical examination gave confirmatory results. By this summary it may be seen that there were 9 cases in the months of March, April and May, 4 cases in June, 1 in July, and 2 in August, 16 cases in all. This week's "Public Health Reports" contains a very interesting article entitled "The Hoffkine Prophylactic and Anti-Pest Serum, the Hoffkine Prophylactic against Plague and a comparison of its Action with Antiplague Serum," by P. A. Surgeon H. D. Geddings.

INFECTIOUS GASTROENTERITIS IN CONSTANTINOPLE.

The surgeon-general of the Marine-Hospital Service has received a report of the service rendered to the exigencies of the situation in Constantinople, Dr. Spiridon C. Zavitiziano, dated August 6, 1900, in which mention is made of a widespread epidemic of infectious gastroenteritis in that city. The disease is almost exclusively confined to children, and the writer makes the statement that not a single child has escaped the epidemic. Many adults have also been affected. The disease is known generally as "cholera nostras." During the month of May eleven deaths occurred from this disease, and during June, ninety-nine. Fifty-six deaths occurred from July 1 to 15. The cases treated by Dr. Zavitiziano included about sixty foundlings, and no death occurred among them. The treatment was confined exclusively to the giving of cold baths, as many as twelve a day. In consequence of this treatment, the diarrhoea is said to stop in ninety cases out of a hundred, without medication.

PLAGUE SITUATION IN GLASGOW, SCOTLAND.

On receipt of the first rumor concerning plague in Glasgow, orders were issued by the surgeon-general of the Marine-Hospital Service to P. A. Surgeon A. R. Thomas, on duty in London, England, to investigate the rumor and report. Dr. Thomas immediately proceeded to Glasgow and cabled, under date of August 30, 1900, that there had been one suspicious death and several suspicious cases in Glasgow; that the bacteriological examination had not yet been completed; that all contacts had been disinfected and were under medical observation, that there existed an epidemic of smallpox in the district. The source had not been traced. On the following day another telegram was received, stating that the local board of health had declared that Glasgow was infected with plague, there having been eleven cases and one suspicious case. Dr. Thomas has been detailed for duty in the office of the U. S. Consul at Glasgow, to inspect the shipping leaving that port for the United States and to issue bills of health in conjunction with the consul. Acting Ass't-Surgeon Hough has been ordered from London to Glasgow to assist Dr. Thomas, and Ass't-Surgeon John F. Anderson has been ordered from Vienna, Austria, to London to assume Dr. Thomas's duties during his absence. At (September 4) there are reported to be ninety-two persons in Glasgow, either sick with plague or suspected and isolated.

Influence of Menstruation on Gastric Functions. Elsner has been investigating the influence of menstruation on the functions of the stomach and finds that, while the motility is not affected, the acidity varies to a great extent and that the acidity may vary from the least deficient to extreme acidity in many cases. In only five out of the fourteen cases examined were the gastric functions the same during menstruation as at other times. He concludes his communication in the Arch. f. Verd. V, by calling attention to the possible source of error in investigating the chemical functions of the stomach during the menstrual period.

Why Do the Quack and the Faith Curist at Times Succeed.

To the Editor.—An exhaustive answer to the above query is not contemplated, as it would greatly transcend the limits with the note, but it is proposed to draw attention to two very chief factors in the success of the irregular, of the "Christian Scientist," and of others of the profligate breed of "curists." One of the causes is wholly without the influence of the medical profession, being deep-rooted in the inherent mental processes of all mankind, while the other is entirely within the power of the profession to elince.

First, as Ratzel, in his "History of Mankind," well says in speaking of the Chinese: "Superstitious medicine is one of the deepest-seated disorders of the human mind, of which perhaps it will never quite be cured." This ingrained, often subconscious, but almost always alert, substratum of belief in the intervention of supernatunial agencies in the cure of disease and in the relief of suffering is honestly inherited from our savage forefathers, who made night hideous with the din that was to drive away the evil spirit which had caused the sickness, and whose barbarous attempts to aid the sufferer frequently contributed to the fatal ending, even as now does the neglect of the "faith" devoted. Until knowledge of the natural phenomena of the human body is much more widely diffused—slightly prior to the millennium—the mass of mankind will have an unreasoning and implicit trust in the efficacy of the occult in healing disease. During the next two eons physicians perform will continue to exercise charitable sympathy upon the foibles of the public in matters of health. The thorough study of the life-processes thus far known to us is already so intricate that large numbers of physicians have but a smattering of it, and really make their diagnoses and administer their drugs in a fashion but little removed from that of the "medicine man" of ancient days. However, this class is steadily being superseded by men trained in true physiology.

In the second place, there is a matter that lies to our hand every day and that tends constantly to add recruits to the clientele of the "healers" of various descriptions and of incongruous designations. Stress of financial need and thirst for reputation lead some of our younger surgeons and gynecologists, together with a few of the older ones, all too often to recommend an operation for the relief of conditions that might well be cared for otherwise; and sometimes, be it said in sadness, for the promised cure of lesions whose existence is apocryphal. What is the result? The patient feels that the occasion does not warrant the danger and expense of an operation, and so drifts along unaided to finally fall into the hands of a "quack" of some breed, to receive the necessary stimulus to renewed mental, and consequently, bodily vigor. This patient then naturally becomes an opponent to scientific medicine, even though he may subsequently relapse and require the aid of a physician. While this is happening every day, it is unnecessary. Physicians who recommend radical methods before giving a thorough trial to gentler means administered with common sense and along with hearty encouragement to the patient, are heedlessly doing their profession, and so themselves, a very great injustice. We must make a living out of our profession, but if we do it at the expense of exact honesty to our patients, we shall have done very badly by the profession to which we owe our education. Slipshod ways of practicing medicine are responsible for a very great deal of the quackery and voodooism that steadily flourishes in our midst.

In our wrathful characterization of those who prey upon the superstitious gullibility of people who are not very sick, lest we not forget that most dramatic scene when it was said: "Here is without sin, here in the first place, he persist in indiscriminately recommending the removal of ovaries for the cure of idiopathic epilepsy, in doing ventroseptum for the relief of headaches, in curtailing every case of leucorrhoea, and in advising the opening of every belly that aches, we must not be surprised if some of our patients find..."
a temporary relief in the gentler hands of the irregular. All of these operations and radical procedures are of inestimable value in their proper place, but we must have a care to advise them only when the conditions imperatively demand it.

In this no disrespect is intended toward the most progressive branch of modern medicine—surgery. On the contrary, the trained surgeon who is fault in this matter, but the doctors of medium education and limited experience, whose self-confidence leads them to the belief that they are competent to make a surgical diagnosis and to operate. It is the amateur operator, if the expression is permissible, who is chiefly responsible for an unduly large proportion of the best material of the irregulars. The man of lesser experience has not yet learned, or else forgets, that to a very considerable proportion of the laity the word "operation" is in itself possessed of unknown terrors. This dread of radical procedure, even in cases in which it would very probably be beneficial, often is responsible for the drift of the ill-informed and unfortunate patient into the arms of the irregular. Great care should be exercised in recommending radical measures, especially if the physician or surgeon has not known the patient sufficiently long to have fully obtained his confidence. Especially is this true of the younger man, for in the case of the surgeon of well-established reputation his advice, even to a distant patient, comes freighted with the full power of suggestion, and the recommendation of even extreme methods is received with due respect.

It is hoped that these statements will not be received as an indication of malice or proclivity for finding fault, but simply to point out one observed manner in which many of us are furnishing recruits to the army that follows the quack and the faith-cureist and the patent-medicine man.

P. MAXWELL FOSHAY, M.D.

**Dr. Jacobi's Address and Sectionalism.**

**GEOVILLE, S. C. Aug. 23, 1900.**

To the Editor,—As a Southerner I may be excused for taking exception to an altogether gratuitous comment on the South, which appeared in your issue of August 18 last—this, too, by one whose eminence, not to say years, should have put him beyond the pale of provincialism. I refer to the words of Dr. A. Jacobi, the venerable and, I doubt not, venerated source of much that has contributed to the advancement of our science.

On page 427 is the following: "The greatest refinement of the East, the wild naturalism of part of the Far West, the abject animalism of part of the South, are covered by the same flag."

Now, there is, of course, great refinement in the East; and there is also "abject animalism," and plenty of it, in the South. But anyone who knows both peoples knows it is equally true that there is "abject animalism," and plenty of it, in the East, and great refinement, and no lack of it, in the South. It is not, then, the actual expression to which the Doctor gave tongue that is objectionable, but the inferential and insinuating quality of his remarks addressed to those good people across the water who know us not, save as existing, and who quite naturally accept the imputations and inferences of an eminent American as authoritative and indisputable.

To say the least, it was an unfair advantage for the Doctor to take—to contrast the highest stratum of society in his own section with the lowest in his brother's section, and give the impression to his hearers that that difference constitutes the difference of the two sections—and no one present to deny his insinuations.

It may be that I am doing the learned gentleman an injustice in thus alleging a "no fair" play, but that in event his remarks were the outcome, then, of carelessness, or of ignorance of existing conditions, either of which is reprehensible under the circumstances.

J. WILKINSON JENKINS, M.D.

**Mailing of Sputum.—**The Belgian postoffice department has issued an order that all sputa and such substances to be sent by mail for bacteriologic examination must be put up in thick glass bottles, sealed and inclosed in strong wooden or tin boxes, filled with sufficient soft material to absorb the contents if the bottle should be broken. It is also suggested that the nature of the contents should be indicated on the label.

**Book Notices.**


This little volume has appeared largely as separate articles in the New York Medical Journal, but in its collected form its publication is a service to the profession. The author takes up the various subjects that interest the physician in their relation to the law and gives in clearly stated, perfectly intelligible form what we must consider the accepted legal views in regard to them without obscuring them by any unnecessary phraseology or technicalities. The subjects of the rights of the physician and the rights of the patient are fully discussed and the general trend of the law is on the whole one that is somewhat comfortable for the physician to appreciate. It is commonly said that human law is the perfection of wisdom; as medical men we often have reason to see applications of it where this statement is practically reversed, but this fact is due largely to the idioy of judges and especially juries. In this country it would seem that the English law, in Great Britain, and this book bears out this view. It is small, convenient, condensed, and in every way handy, and if, as we assume, correct in its legal statements, a very valuable and convenient hand-book for the average practicing physician on its subject.


This book is a disappointment; it is not exactly what one would suppose it to be from its title. The author starts out as usual with personal history, reminiscences of different prominent physicians he has met in his student life and since, but as the book progresses he covers nearly every subject in medicine, hygiene, etc., that could possibly be brought in it, while his grammar slips. His facts also, though mainly reliable and accurate, suffer somewhat in the same way, as for example when he states that gaulttheria procumbens and Mitchella replea are identical plants, probably because both are popularly called wintergreen. He gives a large amount of valuable didactic information and is full in his remarks in regard to the adulterations and sophistications of wines and alcoholic drinks, but he seems to omit the similar possibility in beer, since he says all lager beer is made of malt. Such inaccuracies as these appear throughout the book and to some extent mar its value. However, it will be found interesting reading and one could pick it up and pass a little time with it without suffering enough. The information he gives in regard to verology and kindred subjects will probably be new to many of his professional readers, while the layman will acquire a considerable superficial knowledge of many points in medicine from the perusal of the doctor's book.


