

NEWS AND TOPICS OF THE DAY.

[Continued from page 167.]

CHOLERA ALLOWANCE TO MEDICAL OFFICERS OF ST. PANCRAS. At a weekly meeting of Guardians of the Parish of St. Pancras, held lately, the rate of remuneration to the Medical Officers for their services during the cholera was considered. One party proposed £25, and another £40. The latter sum was carried by a majority of 9 to 8. At the next weekly meeting, on the motion being put for confirming the minutes, another division took place as to the amount to be allowed; when 16 voted on each side. The Chairman gave his casting vote in favour of £40.

ORIGIN OF CHOLERA; ITS FIRST APPEARANCE IN CHINA. "This terrible malady manifested itself first in China; then spread to the other countries of Asia, and afterwards reached Europe. It was under the following circumstances this formidable scourge, formerly unknown, made its first appearance. We have the account from a great number of the inhabitants of the province of Chan-tong, who were eye-witnesses of what they related. In the first year of the reign of the deceased Emperor—that is to say, in the year 1820—a mass of reddish vapour was noticed one day upon the surface of the Yellow Sea. This singular phenomenon was observed by the Chinese of the province of Chan-tong, which forms its coast. These vapours were at first light, but gradually increased, became condensed, rose little by little above the surface of the water, and at last formed an immense red cloud, which remained for several hours floating in the air. The Chinese were seized with terror, as they mostly are in the presence of all great natural phenomena; and sought in certain superstitious practices of the bonzes the means of averting the threatened calamity. They burnt vast quantities of magic paper, which they threw all flaming into the sea. They formed long processions, in which they bore the image of the Great Dragon; for they of course attributed these sinister omens to the anger of that fabulous personage. At last they had recourse to an extreme measure, only adopted in desperate cases: they executed a tremendous charivari all along the sea-coast. Men, women, and children, went striking redoubled blows upon all the instruments most capable of producing a loud and sonorous noise—tom-toms, kitchen utensils, and metal implements of all kinds; and the wild and savage outcries of a countless multitude of people increased the horror of this infernal uproar. We were ourselves once witnesses of a similar manifestation in one of the great towns of the south, where all the inhabitants, without exception, shut up in their houses, struck as in frenzy every metallic article within reach, uttering at the same time the most frantic and incredible vociferations. One can hardly imagine anything more frightful than this monstrous tumult arising in the bosom of a great city. Whilst the inhabitants of Chan-tong were seeking to conjure away this unknown misfortune, which yet every one foresaw, a violent wind suddenly began to blow, and, dividing the cloud into various columns, drove them on toward the land. These red vapours spread in a winding course along the hills and valleys, and swept over the towns and villages; and wherever they passed men found themselves attacked by a frightful disease, which in a moment deranged the entire organisation, and changed a living man into a hideous corpse. In vain did the doctors anxiously turn over their books; nowhere could they find any hint of their new, strange, and terrible enemy, that struck like a thunderbolt, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other—on poor and rich, young and old; but always apparently in the most capricious manner, without following any fixed rule in the midst of its fearful ravages. Numberless remedies were tried, numberless experiments were made, but entirely without success; and the implacable scourge went raging on with unabated fury, plunging whole populations into terror and mourning. According to all that the Chinese have told us of this terrible malady, it was incontestably the cholera. It ravaged first the province of Chan-tong; then turned northwards to Peking, striking always in its march the most populous towns. At Peking its victims were proportionally more numerous than elsewhere. Thence the cholera crossed the Great Wall; and the Chinese say that it faded away in the Land of Grass. It is probable that it followed the route of the caravans as far as the Russian station of Khiaktha; and that afterwards, passing through Siberia, it invaded Russia and Poland, whence it made a bound to France after the Revolution of 1830, just ten years after it had issued from the bosom of the Yellow Sea." (*Vide The Chinese Empire*, by M. Huc, formerly Missionary Apostolic in China.)

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