

Consumption

Introduction

In 1909 a series of articles under the general heading of 'Health and Housing in Malton' appeared in the Yorkshire Gazette. This Education Sheet is transcribed from the article 'Consumption' which appeared in the Yorkshire Gazette, 14 August 1909.

First in Destructive Power

Of all infectious diseases, tuberculosis stands prominently first in its slow and sure destruction of life. Such being the case, we purpose devoting the larger part of this article to its consideration. We compare the number of deaths from tuberculous diseases in Malton with the deaths from other forms of infectious disease in the chart and tables set out below. If we look at the ages at death, we

"Scarcely Credible."

The total deaths from tuberculous disease in the Malton Urban District from 1891 to 1908 amount to 210, the total deaths from all other forms of infectious disease amounting to only 30; and when we compare the mortality of tuberculous disease with any of the above-named infectious diseases, the results are scarcely credible. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that in times past medical men despaired of cure in pronounced cases of pulmonary phthisis and other forms of tuberculous disease. We live in better times. The "consumptive patient" is no longer doomed to die by slow degrees. There is hope for him, but it must be joined with action both on the part of the patient and the sanitary authorities. So much as this the case, that without this joint action all schemes for

Best Means of Prevention

We cannot do more than quote from the Medical Officer of Health's report to the local Council in March last. Referring to the regulation above named, he says, "It is furthermore desirable that

Tuberculosis is "the white man's plague" – "the captain of the men of death." In England and Wales its victims are 50,000 people yearly. In Malton there are seven deaths annually from tuberculous diseases to 1.7 from all other infectious diseases.

find tuberculous disease prominent during that period known as the prime of life; hence the education of children who are victims of this disease and the teaching of a trade to them is waste labour. Moreover, every unchecked case of pulmonary tuberculosis is simply a propagating medium for disseminating a disease which already is responsible for one death in every ten!

the stamping out of tuberculosis must approve rogatory.

"There is no reason why tuberculosis should not be as rare as smallpox in your district," was the opinion of the Medical officer of Health as stated in his annual report for 1895, wherein is given valuable information with regard to the prevention of this scourge.

The subject is again referred to in the annual reports for 1897, 1898, 1899, and finally in 1908, when dealing with the public Health (Tuberculosis) Regulations, 1908, which happily came into force on the 1st January 1909.

such information should be supplemented by the advice of your Medical Officer of Health. It will be obvious that in small communities the best methods of prevention cannot readily be made available;

hence simpler and less expensive means have to be adopted, and for my own part I believe that upon the thoroughness of these simpler methods the result will be judged. For the present, therefore, I would suggest that the Council adopt the simplest means possible. The chief means of prevention of pulmonary phthisis (consumption) may be stated briefly under three heads:-

- a) The education of the patient and his associates.
- b) The destruction of infection at its source.
- c) The disinfection of infected material in the broadest sense of the word "material."

With regard to the first, I would strongly recommend the adoption of printed cards containing advice to consumptives and the general precautions to be taken by such persons.

Hope for the Future

We are glad to note that the Malton Urban Council adopted these suggestions and we hope soon to see pulmonary phthisis compulsorily notifiable. There are difficulties, but with cordial co-operation and understanding on the part of the medical faculty, there should be little friction. Let it at once be said that the sanitary officials should only act in cases

Housing : Milk : Isolation

There are three other points to which attention may be drawn. The first of these is that bad housing and overcrowding have a definite influence in propagating tuberculous disease. Phthisis varies in proportion to density of population. In 1905 it was higher by 19.3 per cent in the urban counties of England and Wales than in the rural counties. The second important point is the milk supply, already referred to in the article on infantile mortality. There is now indisputable evidence that milk does spread the disease. Market milk, when examined, has been found to contain the germ, in a considerable percentage of cases, varying from one per cent, to 22 per cent. in English towns. The Royal Commission appointed in 1901 reported that cows' milk containing bovine tubercle

A Great Need

The one great need of this district in the way of prevention of consumption is the provision of suitable accommodation for the legitimate working-

The second suggestion is based upon the fact that the sputum of consumptives is the chief source of infection; hence the destruction of it at source is the point to aim at. The simplest means available are: for the bedridden patient, paper 'spit' cups which must be burnt after use; for patients able to get about, or at work, ordinary glass sputum flasks. The cost of both these is extremely small.

The third indication is intended to apply to those cases of tuberculosis which have proved fatal, or persons who have simply changed their residence whilst suffering from the disease; in short, to protect others by cleansing and disinfecting such room or rooms as have been occupied by patients suffering from the disease.

when called upon to do so by the medical attendant. We trust also that those suffering from "consumption" may be careful not to spit about at random, but use the flasks and cups as suggested, remembering that they may save life and suffering in others by exercising a little thought and self-denial.

bacilli is clearly a cause of tuberculosis, and fatal tuberculosis, in man. Thirdly, it is extremely important that consumptives should be separated, especially when they are in an advanced state of the disease. Bearing in mind the fact that the most frequent cases of consumption in a town like Malton are to be found in districts and houses where there is the least air space per individual, authorities should endeavour to provide means for the isolation of consumptive cases. This is in the interest of the population at large, as well as in that of the unfortunate patients themselves. In some cases, Friendly Societies have combined together to supply sanatoria, but unfortunately these are few and far between.

class population that rightly belongs to it. We note that the Medical Officer of Health, both in his monthly and annual reports, points out the great

need of systematic inspection of the district with a view to reporting those cases of overcrowded and filthy dwellings which are to be found scattered throughout this district. They are the very hotbeds of tuberculous disease. We know that many such hovels are occupied by the loafer class, but it is no charity to provide cheap, tumbledown cottages for such persons; rather is it encouraging a danger to

health and morals, since both by example and precept they teach the rising generation and so provide for the continuity of a species which disgraces our so-called civilisation and gives pause to the work of the reformer. We repeat that, in the best interests of the community, systematic inspection and report must be made without delay. The problem must be faced.

Malton Urban District Council

Cases notified and deaths recorded during the years 1891 to 1908 inclusive:-

All notifiable diseases except tuberculous ones:-

1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	Total																			
Cases	Deaths																																				
5	5	52	1	26	4	39	3	27	4	18	2	13	0	29	0	8	0	16	0	18	0	33	3	51	3	9	1	45	2	16	0	21	2	7	0	433	30

Deaths from Phthisis

1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	Total
6	3	6	4	5	11	2	2	1	55	9	2	6	4	7	4	10	3	90

Deaths from other Tubercular Diseases

1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	Total
8	3	10	4	7	11	5	4	2	5	14	6	6	4	8	6	12	5	120

Note.- The year 1908 is remarkable for the lowest birth-rate and death-rate, as also for the lowest number of notified cases of infectious diseases, but tuberculous disease and infantile mortality remain unaltered.