

Aircraft, Insects, and Disease

WHEN engineers dammed the River Nile so that flood waters could be controlled, and more production and richness follow the irrigation that became possible, they never dreamt of the untoward result they were to bring about. In Egypt there was a snail, and the water that was to bring wealth, brought that snail everywhere, too. This snail was the intermediate host of a disease in humans called schistosomiasis. The fellahs didn't bother with privies and used the irrigation waters, the canals and ponds, for disposal of body wastes, for drinking water and for their ablutions. So the infection was constantly in the water, developing inside the snail, and ready to get back into humans when they came washing or bathing. In spite of irrigation and plenty of water, the fellahs became poorer, because they were riddled with schistosomiasis and couldn't do a decent day's work. Had those engineers damming the Nile linked health with development, they would have started an educational campaign to teach the fellahs the proper disposal of body wastes at the same time as construction began. The World Health Organisation is now helping Egypt to recover the lost ground, and achieve more productivity and less poverty by teaching the fellahs how to avoid schistosomiasis.

Here are some more unexpected results: Madagascar had an anopheline mosquito. It was carried to Mauritius where, till then, malaria was unknown. Mauritius had 32,000 deaths in a resultant malaria epidemic, following the mosquito's introduction. It's a long way from West Africa to Brazil, but that type of mosquito was allowed to make the trip. Brazil soon had 300,000 cases, 16,000 deaths. Egypt was free from malaria. Those picturesque boats plied up and down the full range of the Nile Valley. The anopheles mosquito joined some of these boats in the Sudan. Nobody worried, for they weren't on the passenger list. Arriving in Egypt, and deciding to stay, they gave that country hundreds of thousands of cases of malaria, tens of thousands of deaths.

It was disasters such as these that led to travellers having to abide by sanitary regulations, so that they themselves couldn't carry diseases from one country to another, and ships transport rats, fleas, and plague, and so forth. Air travel changed the picture. The safety from the

This is the text of a talk on health broadcast recently from ZB, YA and YZ stations of the NZBS by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy-Director-General of Health

slowness of surface transport vanished. We in New Zealand could now be suddenly confronted with cholera and small-pox. We could have mosquitoes brought in from malarious countries. It is possible they could establish themselves in the warmth of the Auckland province. We are not as safe as we were in the past.

The World Health Organisation stepped in. After some years of negotiations the nations have, with a very few exceptions, accepted the International Sanitary Regulations made by World Health, and have given them legal backing in their countries. This is why, on long distance air travel, your aircraft is sprayed against mosquitoes and insects, either before landing, or immediately afterwards before disembarkation. People are constantly making a fuss about this, objecting to the smell, objecting to the delay. Insects may be in the cabin of the aircraft, or in the luggage hold, or on the clothes of passengers, or in flowers given to them. They are not harmed by high altitudes, or changes in air pressures or temperatures. They have to be killed before the plane's passengers land in a new country.

So passengers have, for a few minutes, to breathe air full of pyrethrin and DDT. That is what is usually in those small metal pressure cylinders, or aerosols, that the steward sprays about during flight, or the health inspector annoys folk with just after arrival. You may perhaps see this method disappear, if experimental work on incorporating insecticides is successful. The idea is to paint the interior of aircraft with certain new resinous varnishes containing a powerful insecticide.

In the meantime, no more poking of faces at the rite of disinsection of aircraft! "What good can that do?" I've heard passengers say. It protects millions of people in other lands from pestilences such as yellow fever and malaria. It keeps New Zealand free from new mosquito introductions, and also from some carriers of agricultural and stock diseases. No more grumbling, then, but be happy to see the aerosol in action.

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and his feeling all fresh and open to good is the most beautiful thing this world produces." And you will certainly note the compliment Sheridan paid to a young lady: "Won't you come into the garden? I would like my roses to see you."

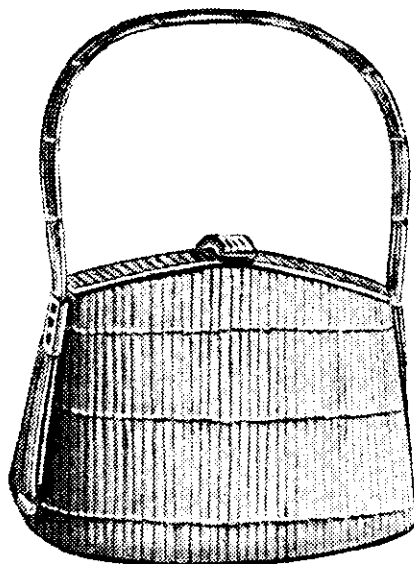
One source has a special interest for New Zealand. From 1937 to 1945 Dr. Karl Popper, an Austrian, was senior lecturer in philosophy at Canterbury University College. He went to a chair in London and wrote a notable book called *The Open Society and its Enemies*, in which he arraigns Plato as the progenitor of totalitarianism. That Lord Samuel quotes him several times is compliment to Professor Popper and proof of the freshness of his own mind in old age.

Through this miscellany, to which he himself contributes, runs a pattern of the collector's tastes and philosophy. Lord Samuel stands for the liberal tradition in politics, letters and life. As a party creed, Liberalism may be dead or

dying, but if the liberal spirit dies, freedom will perish with it. There are plain signs of his Victorian up-bringing, such as the passages from Mill and Emerson. It is also significant that, next to Lord Samuel himself, George Meredith is the most often quoted person. His style and buoyancy are among the reasons for the decline in Meredith's reputation in the last thirty years, but how good he is in these extracts—how penetrating and clear, how fresh and stimulating! Neither Meredith nor Lord Samuel has any truck with defeatism or despair. "Among the cardinal virtues," says Lord Samuel, "should be counted public spirit." "Pessimism is futile, and optimism is fatuous, and both are false. The right creed is meliorism." Thus does this veteran look at the world at eighty-four.

THE first of five talks by Alan Mulgan with the general title "Quotation and Misquotation" will be heard from 4YC on Monday, November 1, at 7.31 p.m., and from 2YC on Wednesday, November 3, at 10.6 p.m. The series will be heard later from other stations.

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