

THE LESSON OF THE EPIDEMIC

Some hazy idea of what would happen to Darwin if the real pneumonic influenza ever gets an introduction may be gathered from the almost disastrous results of the present outbreak. Less than a hundred people are suffering from a complaint which in most cases is not much worse than an ordinary cold, but the effect on the town has been wonderful: The hotels are quiet as a church; the streets are devoid of the usual moving mass of humanity; shops and business places generally look lame and silent; and schools, hotels, churches and theatres are closed. All this unusual interruption of affairs means stagnation of business and loss to a number of people. Serious enough, but necessary in order that the kitten may be choked before it develops into the tiger.

The chief source of trouble and danger in the present outbreak has been the Terminus Hotel, the victims including the manager, the housekeeper, both waitresses, the waiter, the second cook, and all the barmen. Boarders have been pressed into service to perform household duties and to act as nurses for the sufferers, though this latter duty has since been rendered unnecessary by the arrival of a trained nurse from the hospital. Imagine, then, what would result if the real thing—pneumonic influenza—happened to pay us a visit. It has devastated most cities and large towns throughout the world. Some islands in the Pacific have been almost depopulated and many business men have been ruined. The dead in Africa and India were numbered by the hun-

and India were numbered by the hundred thousand. The only place in Australia which has escaped, so far, seems to be that part of the north coast of which Darwin is the centre. Experience shows that where the population consists largely of colored races, huddled together as they generally are in stuffy little iron houses, having little, if any, regard for modern ideas of sanitation, the toll of the scourge has been heaviest. Here in Darwin, in its

most populous thoroughfare, ideal conditions prevail in that regard, and if ever the pandemic secures a victim within its precincts, the resulting holocaust will be a shock to humanity. The Terminus Hotel, in the centre of that quarter, is probably the most lucrative business of the kind in Australia, yet its accommodation and construction generally is only equal to what obtains in the cowsheds and stables in an ordinary hotel down south. The dining room is a low lean-to, with the blistering, unprotected corrugated iron only a few feet above the heads of those sitting at the tables. The heat is intense and perspiration is profuse, and after meals boarders sit out in cool, draughty places, and readily catch a cold or any other thing that may be floating about. Fortunately, so far, pneumonic influenza does not seem to have been floating about, for which we should be truly thankful.