

# RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PLAGUE—GOD'S OR OURS?

*Dr. van Allen's Utterance—Church  
School Union — Cathedral Ser-  
vice Unit — Naval Service Club  
in New Quarters*

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**P**REACHING last Sunday, the day of the resumption of regular services after the epidemic, Dr. van Allen, rector of the Church of the Advent, dealt with Responsibility for the Plague, God's or Ours? Genesis 4: 7 was his text. Acknowledging the fearful reality of the disease (as against some Christian Science utterances, attributing it wholly to fear), he urged that God was no more to be blamed for allowing the pestilence than for allowing a conflagration, started by an incendiary, to rage through modern tenements surrounded by inflammable rubbish. That God permits the consequences of men's follies and crimes is not to say that He ordains them. And those who demand of God's goodness a constant series of miracles to avert those consequences, and lose faith because the demand is not granted, misjudge Him as truly as those who conceive Him deliberately devising pestilence and famine as disciplinary measures apart from such consequences. All pain and sorrow and disease are associated ultimately with sin, part of the

groaning and travailing of a disordered creation. But polluted water-supply, not God's will, causes a typhoid epidemic. And our great cities where thousands are slum-dwellers offer fuel for influenza to spread and rage like a flame. Boston's greatest proportion of deaths was in the poorest quarters—where double-decker tenements, garbage-filled courts, blind alleys, dark bedrooms, and overcrowding still are found. And since no man liveth unto himself alone, the pestilence, nourished there, reached out everywhere till there were neither coffins nor graves enough for the victims. Over two hundred a day were killed. The guilt is ours who have tolerated such foul conditions, have left greedy landlords to oppress the poor, have too long allowed corruption in city government to waste our treasure.

**We rejoice, and rightly, over the liberation of Lille and Ostende: When shall we liberate the North End? There is no room in a free land for slums and slum dwellers. We fight for justice. Let us do justice at home. So when sin couches at our door, covetous, careless, selfish, indifferent, we shall rule over it, as the belligerents of a just and loving God should do.**