

MEDICAL SCIENCE

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BY JOHN COVENTRY, M.D., WINDSOR, PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF EXECUTIVE HEALTH OFFICERS OF ONTARIO.

Ladies and Gentlemen: This organization has now been in existence since October 1886. The duties which the members of it then look upon themselves and those since added, together with the results, are legitimate subjects for enquiry and criticism, not only by members of the Association, but by the public at large, who have been lead to expect some tangible proof of the usefulness of the society.

The constitution sets forth that the objects of the Association shall be to promote the interests of the public health. The progress made is certainly not such as could have been desired. With a view to assisting the Mayor of Woodstock and other gentlemen who were associated with him including nearly the whole of the medical profession of the town—to adopt a a system whereby a pure supply of water could be obtained for the use of the inhabitants, our last meeting was held there. Although that and other subjects were fully discussed, and the danger of drinking well water from a porous soil, was fully set forth, a by-law to introduce waterworks, was rejected shortly after our meeting.

For the purpose of collecting information which would enable us to place in a tabulated form the principal dangers menacing human life and the means used for preventing them, it was suggested at our last meeting that the work be divided among ten committees those you see named in the programme—to report at this meeting. I trust that the reports, generally, will be more satisfactory than the one assigned to myself.

If the health officers from whom information was asked, have failed to respond to our enquiries we

readily anticipate the reason of their silence. In times past, and to a very great extent at the present time, medical men have had nearly the whole of the sanitary work of the country to look after. Some municipalities have appointed Medical Health Officers under the statute. Some have not. Nearly all have small salaries, some have none at all. One series of questions after another is sent to them and extended answers are requested, until the limit of unremunerated human endurance is reached and small blame attaches if the inquisitive circular is assigned to the waste basket.

A scriptural maxim says that "the laborer is worthy of his hire;" the sanitary laborer is expected to work without hire. Just how long this condition of affairs will last, is a problem that those who are entrusted with the legislation of the country are to consider. Is the Medical Health Officer a necessity? If he is, what should be his duties? what sum should he be paid for the faithful discharge of these duties? These points determined, it will be in order to enquire into the fitness of the physician to occupy this office.

We must not be too exacting at first but it will not be amiss to contemplate the Medical Health Officer of the future. It will not suffice that he is a good practitioner, or that he is a kindly, benevolent gentleman—nearly all doctors possess these qualifications. It is not enough that he is an abstemious man—that he does not drink nor smoke—shall I mention the hope that few medical men do either? It will not fill the bill that he keeps books correctly and makes regular returns to the Department. The Health Officer of the future will be an embodiment of a physician, a chemist, detective, an engineer, and if he is a bit of a lawyer it will be all the better. For present necessi-