

REMARKS ON THE ANTIQUITY OF HYGIENE AND ITS SCOPE AS A STUDY.

It is not to be wondered at that the ancients, ignorant of the Living and True God, "in whom we live and move and have our being," should conjecture that there existed supernatural beings that controlled the laws of nature, either in their beneficent or injurious effects; and as the one Supreme Being was unknown, the conclusion arose of "Gods many and Lords many," appropriating to a presiding deity the cause and effect of every known phenomenon that came under their observation either in the heavens above or on the earth beneath. Every element, therefore, of nature had its gods; fire and water, winds and waves, summer and winter, day and night, the fruits of the earth, and the blessings and misfortunes of mankind—each had its superintending genius, who became the personification of the good to be desired, or of the evil to be deprecated. Among these tutelary deities none had greater honors paid to her than Hygeia, the daughter of Æsculapius, the Goddess of Health—indeed the veneration held for this divinity was surpassed by none. Nor is this to be attributed to any other cause than self-preservation as the first law of nature, and the consequent maxim that "health is the greatest of blessings."

It is no modern notion, therefore, the intimate relationship of hygiene to medicine, as being that part whose subject is the preservation of health, while medicine, from its root, "*medeor*," to cure, is applicable to all substances that possess any property capable of mitigating or curing disease.

There is a trite adage handed down from our fathers, "Prevention is better than cure," from which we may fairly deduce that the study of Hygiene precedes, as an initiative, the study of medicine, and can at any rate claim never to be separate from it. What is Hygiene then? Briefly it is the art of preserving health, that is of obtaining the most perfect action of body and mind during as long a period as is consistent with the laws of life. In other words it aims at rendering growth more perfect, decay less rapid, life more vigorous, death more remote. To this end Herodicus, who flourished before Hippocrates, and who went by the surname of "Gymnastic" was the first to introduce medical