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## THE CAUSES OF THE DEGENERACY OF THE HUMAN RACE.\*

By A. B. ATHERTON, M.D., LL.D., Fredericton, N.B.

IN the first place, it is my pleasing duty to return thanks to the members of the Maritime Medical Association for the great honor they have done me in my election to the high office of President, and to assure them I appreciate very greatly the distinction.

In casting about for a theme upon which to address you on this occasion, it occurred to me that instead of choosing a more professional subject, it might be both interesting and profitable to direct attention to the causes of the degeneracy of the human race, which seems to be taking place in the more highly civilized nations, and suggest some remedies for this condition.

It may well be said that I have set myself a large task, and I can hope only to barely touch upon the subject very cursorily and briefly. I shall take it for granted that the civilized nations are undergoing some deterioration in their general physique as well as, perhaps, in their mental powers. I think this is too obvious for anyone to seriously dispute the statement, especially in regard to the first part of my proposition at all events.

Let us now consider some of the causes which are at work in producing such deterioration. These may be referred to under two heads, namely: (1) Those arising from our manner of life, and (2) those which are the result of bad breeding. In other words, we have the acquired and the hereditary influences which tend to degeneration.

In the first class we may place the inevitable tendency to the herding of people in large cities. As a consequence of this we get the overcrowding of many with the insufficiency of fresh air which necessarily follows. We are more than ever, of late, appreciating the importance of this and are finding that a life in the open, away from the more or less polluted atmosphere of the cities, is one of the most efficient remedies for tuberculosis. But if this is one of the chief measures for its cure, is it not still more valuable as a preventive, and should we not be very careful to minimize, as far as possible, this evil of city life by seeing to it that the people are comfortably housed and that the children especially have plenty of out-of-door life? Attention to this last is rendered all the more imperative by the fact that it is considered so very important that the

\* Presidential address before the Maritime Medical Association.