

THE LINDSAY CONVENTION.

God's passionless reformers, influences
That purify and heal, and are not seen,
Shall man say whence your virtue is, or how
We make medicinal, the wayside weed?"

—Lowell.

IT must occasionally have occurred to many, at sometime in their hurry through life, with one day after another repeating the echo of the seldom-ceasing mill-wheel of our routine task, to observe what passive agents we are in the hands of what is now technically called *environment*, but which in a popular way we call *influences*. To-day, to-morrow, and so in succession we move along, like some natural force, *i.e.*, in the direction of least resistance; and if asked why, we would oft-times be tried in finding an answer. We see this in the force with which we follow fashion. Let it be some popular opera, some favorite health resort. it is all the same; with an absence of thought that is often amazing, we go as go the rest, and never answer the why. If we were to attempt to be critical and to differentiate, we might be inclined to ascribe to influences, a power somewhat different from fashion, a something comparable to some organic function, by which, as in the hæmatogenic processes, silently but ceaselessly, results are being produced. Life is inseparable from influences, as is matter from gravity, and man is moulded either for good or evil, or degrees of either, simply by the sum total of influences acting upon him, and which he as faithfully reflects. These thoughts have been prompted by the progress of public health work in Canada during the six years which have gone since organization began in the direction of sanitary work, as a fixed idea in Ontario. The nature of the work to be done even by those engaging in it, was but ill-defined, and methods for obtaining results were inchoate in the extreme. In the town of St. Thomas, just six years ago, the first popular meeting or sanitary convention was held, and its most enthusiastic advocate could not have called it a great success. In fact the people were not at all sure what the promoters of the convention were after. But with such methods of propagandism, aided by extending correspondence, and later obtaining definite health legislation, organization on a broad basis became possible. A large proportion of the six hundred municipalities have since 1884 established Local

Boards, and a staff of some three hundred and fifty medical men are attached as officers to these Boards. It is true that the work that they have undertaken to do is often of a perfunctory character, inasmuch as the absence of definite remuneration for services places a bar on their performance of serious work under ordinary circumstances. But if the people have had to become acquainted with the principles of sanitary work, Boards and their officers have similarly had much to learn. But a review of the advances made in six years indicates a progress in general and municipal knowledge and appreciation of public health work little short of wonderful. Executive officers of health have banded together for practical work in an association which has already reached a membership of more than fifty, and has held meetings for discussion of the practical work they have to deal with. Such a meeting was that at Lindsay last week, which was alike a meeting of executive workers and one at which many of the public found interesting and profitable discussions, which they could understand, being carried on. The Association was entertained by the Mayor and corporation, Local Board and citizens, in a manner which did honor alike to the character for hospitality of the people of Lindsay, and to their appreciation of the presence amongst them of a body of gentlemen who, as was well said in the address of welcome, were engaged in work of benevolence all the more meritorious for the self-sacrifice of men whose business it is to cure disease, but who have bound themselves together for purposes of studying measures for preventing it. The silent influences are indeed making

"Medicinal the wayside weed"

for the growing knowledge is making many more followers of the good in health matters, and multiplying on all sides the propagandism of public and private hygiene; while in many ways the gross unseemly waste products of civilization are being utilized until, from the offense and nuisance, we behold their return to mother earth, there again to play their parts in the restitution of things material. We rejoice to know that this is so, that speaking for ourselves, as physicians, we can claim as our heritage the work, elsewhere so eloquently put by Dr. Gairdner, "of searchers after Nature and Truth;" and that as he further puts it "as we learn more widely of Nature's secrets we shall