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CONSUMPTION—ITS CAUSES AND
PREVENTION.

In the June number of the SANITARY JOURNAL an article was commenced under the above head in which it was shown that consumption is more fatal and costly than any other disease. It was proposed to consider its causes under three principal heads, namely: heredity, contagion, and personal habits and surroundings of life. The first named cause, that of heredity, was then considered: It was stated that so far as heredity is concerned, this is probably for the most part limited to a certain peculiar construction and configuration of body, and especially or largely to an imperfectly developed respiratory capacity—to proportionately small lungs; excepting in those cases in which infants are born with actual tuberculous matter in their system, transmitted from mothers suffering from the disease. Physicians generally, it appears, now regard the influence of heredity in the causation of consumption as of less consequence than it was formerly considered to be; though in so far as it relates to a contracted chest and hence imperfect respiratory capacity it is an important causative factor.

CONTAGION.

From the period of the earliest records in the history of medicine, the contagious nature of consumption has been believed in by physicians of the highest repute. Over two thousand years ago (400 B. C.), Hippocrates, the "father of medicine," believed in it. Aristotle (330

B. C.), wrote that the Greeks in his day believed in it; and he asks why consumption, "sore eyes" and itch are common to persons who associate with others suffering from these affections. Later (A. D. 180), Galen wrote that it is "dangerous to pass the whole day with a consumptive person." Coming down to much more recent periods, Morton, over two hundred years ago, wrote of consumption that "a contagious principle often propagates this disease, for, as I have often found by experience, an affected person may poison a bed-fellow by a kind of miasm like that of a malignant fever." Riverius, about the same period of time, believed contagion to be the "chiefest" cause of consumption. "We may observe women to be affected by their husbands," he wrote, "and men by their wives, and all the children to die of the same, not only from infection of their parents seed, but from the company of him that was first infected."

The eminent Italian physician, Valsalva, a professor of Bologna, in the early part of last century, was himself predisposed to consumption, and avoided being present at dissections of the lungs of persons who had died of the disease. Valsalva's illustrious pupil, Morgagni, professor in the University of Padua, declared that he had never dared to make more than a few *post-mortem* examinations of persons who had died of this disease for fear of contracting it. A law once existed in Italy by which the proprietor