

## FEDERAL v. PROVINCIAL SANITARY LEGISLATION.

**A**LTHOUGH, as I have stated, there are in the Dominion three or four Provincial Boards of Health, Canada as a Dominion has no special provision whatever for promoting the public health. In this she is behind almost every other country, even such as Brazil and Japan. To most legislators whose thoughts and time are chiefly occupied with such questions as railways, colonization and trade, the subject of the public health may seem to be of little consequence. But who will contend that a department of health, or a sub-department, say, in connection with the Federal Government, is not just as essential as almost any one of the present departments? What greater necessity is there for a Federal Department of Justice or of Agriculture? Why could not the affairs of these branches of the Government be left in the hands of the provinces, just as well as matters concerning the Public Health? If anyone will give the subject sufficient attention, he will be very likely to come to the conclusion that no branch of the Public Service needs more to be centralized than that of Health,

I would not, by any means, take from the provinces all authority in relation to health matters. But I say the Canadian Government is or ought to be responsible for the preservation of the health of the Canadian people, and for the country's credit, it should adopt such measures as would secure to all the provinces the best sanitary condition for the preservation of health and life. Not long ago I observed in an English periodical, in some remarks on the low death rate in England, a reference to the high mortality in the "Colonies," and a reminder to emigrants that in leaving Great Britain to live in the "Colonies" they exposed their health and life and the health and life of their families to proportionately greater risk.

The mortality in the cities in Canada is largely in excess of that in the much larger and more densely populated cities in England. The infantile mortality here is something dreadful—something to be ashamed of; while our death rate from

zymotic diseases averages about double that in England. How can any country reach the highest point in her prosperity with such a state of things? How can she reach to even a high point, to say nothing of the highest, with from 20,000 to 40,000 more deaths every year than there should be? The country is undoubtedly fairly, and probably substantially, prosperous. Some people question this; and much is said about our enormous debt and high taxation. As I wrote in a former paper, think of the enormous tax arising from preventable sickness and death. Why, with efficient practical sanitary work, enough could be saved by it in a few years to pay off the national debt.

I shall now endeavor to show why it would be much better for the control of the public health to be under Federal authority. The foundation for good Sanitary organization lies largely in a system of mortuary and other health statistics. By these the place and course of epidemics are learned, as also, is any prevalency endemically, in any locality, of infectious diseases, which might spread and become epidemic. The Province of Ontario might make provision for obtaining such statistics, and obtain them satisfactorily from within the Province, and act upon them. Just across the border of the Province in Quebec or Manitoba, however, there might prevail endemic or epidemic disease in communities having direct intercourse with communities in Ontario. About such disease, Ontario could learn nothing except that it might do so through the Quebec authorities. Again, vaccination might be efficiently practised in one Province and neglected in an adjoining one. Insanitary conditions in regard to drainage, sewage, waste refuse or water supply, ready to explode at any time from the igniting touch of a case of malignant infectious disease, might exist at the border of one Province to the great danger of the one next to it, which would be practically helpless in preventing a catastrophe.

True, the same difficulties are now encountered in relation to the Provinces and the adjoining states. But we cannot