

National Health, the Nation's Greatest Asset.

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Many years ago Disraeli said: "The public health is the first duty of the statesman." The statement was made at a time when little had been done towards the establishment of such health services as exist today in most civilized countries, and the speaker must indeed have been a seer did he realize how amply subsequent developments would justify his remark. It will be my aim to prove to you that what was true in Disraeli's time is by no means less true today, that in very reality "public health is public wealth," and that President Roosevelt's recent utterance "Our national health is, physically, our greatest national asset," is not only reasonable but easily demonstrated.

It is needless to assert that vigorous health is essential to the best performance of which any man is capable. It is a truism that what applies to the individual applies to the nation at large. And history shows that the fate of nations has largely been determined by the attention bestowed upon what we have come to term "health-problems." While we amuse ourselves sometimes in contrasting the primitive methods of past ages with those with which we are familiar, it is nevertheless apparent to the reader of history that the ancient nations showed no greater a proportionate dissimilarity in their regard for the health of the people than is manifested by the nations of today. It might be said that the degree of civilization to which any nation has attained may be fairly measured by the attention it has given to public health matters. For proof one has but to refer to the experience of the past. Simplicity of life, stern discipline and abundance of physical exercise marked the rise of many of the powers which have successively ruled the world, while departure from these rules, especially when combined with a tendency to self indulgence and moral laxity, contributed much to their