

of the facts which come before them, and who sought for truth without reference to preconceived opinions. It must be admitted that the question was of great practical importance. We did not want, he said, to follow some philosophers in their disputes over the necessarily insoluble problem of spontaneous generation, but we wanted to know whether, as a matter of practical fact, a case of typhoid fever necessarily presumes a pre-existing case in a channel of contagion or only a pre-existing combination of physical conditions. The great difficulty of answering this question arose from the extraordinary complexity of the conditions favourable to the diffusion of disease which we have allowed to spring up around us. It could not be said that a case of typhoid had arisen spontaneously unless every possible channel through which the poison might have been introduced from without had been excluded. Such channels were at present innumerable, and one thing which ought to be sought from the law was their gradual closure. As soon as it was certain that the poison of typhoid commonly came by some particular inlet, that inlet should be made secure against it in the future; and so in time, by the mere process of stopping inlets or guarding them, we should arrive, by the method of exclusion, at certainties at present unattainable. He mentioned how scarlet fever was communicated to his own family by a dog who had come straight into his garden from children who were, it was afterwards found, down with the disease. Thus, he said, disease may be conveyed in some such unsuspected manner as this—by a stray dog, by a beggar, by a tradesman's messenger, in a public conveyance, in a place of amusement, or by casual contact in the street. The postman may have put it into the letter-box, or it may have been delivered with clean linen by the laundress. As long as all these possibilities exist we can be sure of nothing, not even that the disease has actually found admission through the particular channel we suspect. One of the things he thought we might ask from the law, even in the present state of knowledge, was adequate assistance in guarding some of the channels, such as soil-pipes and water-pipes, through which the diseases most familiar to us are now daily distributed. It could not be said that this would be asking the legislature to interpose in a small matter, or to take upon itself duties unworthy of an Imperial assemblage. Lord Macaulay said that "the business of a Government is to protect the lives and property of the governed," and both the lives and property of the English people suffered terribly from the state of things now permitted to exist among us. He showed that the "so called zymotic" diseases had caused in 25 years the loss of 2,500,000 lives in England and Wales, out of a total mortality of 11,000,000. By adding to the 2,500,000 the number of 500,000 for another five years, we arrive at a zymotic mortality of 3,000,000, or nearly equal to the population of London in a single generation. He multiplied the average annual mortality by six, and obtained what is a very low estimate of the average annual sickness, and, taking the average duration of sickness from estimates furnish-