

The task of averting them might have appeared hopeless, but I have rejoiced to see how much has already been done in diminishing them, and to observe how our registers bear witness to the decreasing mortality in our large towns, to the increasing average length of life in the whole population, and of many facts proving the good influence of our sanitary institutions. But on them I do not now propose to dwell. I will only conclude from them that the good already done and the constantly increasing knowledge of the whole subject, may make us sure that much more good may still be attained, and that neither this nor any other nation should be content until prosperity in business and all other things desirable for the national welfare are made consistent with national good health. How the many dangers which our programme indicates may best be dealt with will, of course, be discussed in the several sections. It will be no trivial work if their sources and probable remedies can be clearly pointed out, and especially if this can be done, as in a Congress such as this it should be, in a strictly scientific manner, calmly and dispassionately, without any reference to either general or municipal politics, or for any other purpose than the promotion of health. (Cheers). It is only on conviction such as may thus be produced that the appointed sanitary authorities can compel the changes necessary to be made; for such changes are almost always inconvenient or injurious to some, and might even seem unjust to them, unless it be made quite clear that they would be very beneficial to the community. But my hope is that the work of this Congress may not be limited to the influence which it may exercise on sanitary authorities. It will have a still better influence if it will teach all people in all classes of society how much everyone may do for the improvement of the sanitary conditions among which he has to live. I say distinctly "all classes," for although the heaviest penalties of insanitary arrangements fall on the poor, who are themselves least able to prevent or bear them, yet no class is free from their dangers or sufficiently careful to avert them. Where could one find a family which has not in some of its members suffered from typhoid fever or diphtheria, or others of those illnesses which are especially called "preventable diseases"? Where is there a family in which it might not be asked, "If preventable, why not prevented?" I would add that the questions before the Congress, and in which all should take a personal interest, do not relate only to the prevention of death or of serious diseases, but to the maintenance of the conditions in which the greatest working power may be sustained. In this I include both mental and bodily power, for the highest possible prosperity must be when men and women of all classes, rich and poor alike, can safely do such good and useful work as they are fit for, and for which they are responsible to those among whom they live. To this end it is essential that they should enjoy the best possible health and vigor, and to obtain these it is necessary that everything possible should be done for the promotion and maintenance of the national health. Such then is to be your work; let me say our work, for though I cannot further contribute to the proceedings of the Congress, I shall watch them with much interest, and shall always strive to promote whatever may be here plainly shown to be useful for the public health. (Loud cheers.)