

As respects the public duties which a medical man of the present day is expected to perform, I may particularize disseminating amongst the community amidst whom he practices, a knowledge of those sanitary laws, which have been shown capable, when rightly understood and rigidly enforced, not only of preventing disease, but also of diminishing in severity that which is inevitable. In all climates and under all conditions of life, the purity of the atmosphere habitually respired, a good water supply and drainage are essential to the maintenance of that power of resisting disease, named by Cullen the *vis medicatrix naturæ*. It frequently happens that individuals continue for years to breathe a most unwholesome atmosphere, without apparently suffering from it, and when they at last succumb to some epidemic disease, their death is attributed solely to the latter—the previous preparation of their bodies for the reception and development of zymotic poison being altogether overlooked. That the fatality of epidemics is almost invariably in precise proportion to the degree in which an impure atmosphere has been habitually respired or impure water drank can be proved by the clearest evidence.

That an atmosphere loaded with putrescent miasmata favours the spread of zymotic poison by inducing an abnormal condition of the blood is beyond all question—nay farther, I am disposed to believe there is ample evidence to show, that in the crowded dwellings of the poor, diseases do in this way originate *de novo*. On the other hand, by proper attention to ventilation, water supply, and drainage, the fatality of Epidemics that formerly terrified the nations may be almost completely annihilated and the rate of mortality in disease in general largely decreased. It cannot be too strongly borne in mind, that the efficacy of such preventive measures has been most fully substantiated in regard to many of the very diseases in which the curvative power of medical treatment has seemed most doubtful—as for example cholera and malignant fevers.

The practical importance of this subject is strikingly illustrated by the following startling facts, brought to light by enquiries prosecuted under the direction of the London Board of Health, viz.: That the difference in the annual rates of mortality between the most healthy and the most unhealthy localities in England, amounting to no less than 34 in 1000, is almost entirely due to zymotic diseases, which might be nearly exterminated by well directed sanitary arrangements. The inevitable mortality, arising from diseases which would not be directly affected by sanitary improvements is 11 per 1000 in those districts which are free from zymotic disease. And the average mortality of all England