

munity should be well trained and fitted to discharge what ever duty their station in life called them to perform. Health was absolutely requisite for them. They, therefore, saw that to rear the sickly or to prolong the career of the intemperate, to enable the constitutionally diseased to protract a useless existence and to beget children, which in all probability, would be as unhealthy as themselves, was not the way to make a people healthy. They therefore maintained "that the healing art was revealed by the gods, for the benefit of those whose constitutions were naturally sound, and had not been impaired by their habits of life, but who, attacked by some specific complaint, might be speedily restored to the discharge of their duties. But for the constitutionally diseased and the intemperate, they looked upon the existence of such a man as no gain either to himself or to others, therefore they thought that to attempt to cure such a one was wrong."

Such was the opinion of very wise ancient philosophers, and it certainly will be admitted that such a system, if properly carried out, would attain the desired end. By weeding out those who were sickly, and only bringing up the children of healthy parents, there is little doubt but that many of the ills by which we are afflicted might be eradicated. Indeed, at the present day, this is precisely the plan adopted to rear a particularly fine race among the lower animals. But, thank God, we have learned a higher morality than was taught at the time of Socrates, and, holding deeper views of the sanctity which attaches to each individual life, would shrink with horror from any proposal of that kind. What then is the alternative? Are we to continue to exhaust all the resources of our art, all the improved means which the advance of science has placed at our disposal, in rearing the scrofulous, training the idiotic, enabling the phthisical to marry, to do, in fact, all in our power to counteract that law of nature which provides that in the struggle for existence, the strongest and the healthiest shall survive and carry on the race? At the present time, we have a clearer knowledge of the powers of the remedies we employ, and the objects to be aimed at in their administration. We now know that many of the effects which in former times were attributed to our remedies, are really due to the natural course of the disease. A better knowledge of Pathology, and an improved means of diagnosis, have taught us that many manifestations of disease which, in former times, would have been looked upon as group of symptoms amenable to treatment, are really due to disorganization of vital organs. Though many diseases

are quite under our control, and our means of successful treatment are being constantly increased; there is sure ever to remain a large class of cases, whose condition was hopeless, long before the physician was called in, and in whom the disease will run its course, unaffected by any treatment which we may adopt. But while we admit that our power of curing disease, will in all human probability, always be limited, it is a grand, a glorious satisfaction to know that our power of preventing it admits of indefinite extension. This is the true answer to the objections against the utility of our art, on the ground that, by enabling the feeble and sickly to live and breed, we are really promoting the growth of an unhealthy population.

Recognising, as we now do, that all forms of sickness—whether it be those awful visitations of epidemic pestilence which our ancestors regarded as caused by the direct interposition of supernatural power, or those far more mysterious and inexplicable constitutional taints which, handed down, from parent to child, are the fruitful cause of so much disease—all these, I say, are really due to material causes, and governed by natural laws, which are to a great extent in our control. If, therefore, we can succeed in removing these causes, and so cut off any fresh developments, we may expect the gradual extinction even of the most distinctly hereditary diseases—for, do what we will, the tainted part of the community is far too heavily weighted to prevail ultimately in the race of life. Such, then, being our objects, I think that, so far from being excluded from the state, we deserve a place among its guardians.

Our knowledge, indeed, of the causes of diseases, and of the means of preventing them, rudimentary as they are, are yet far in advance of our actual practice. For this we are not responsible; it is due to ignorance and consequent apathy or prejudice on the part of the great body of the people, who, it seems, to me will never comprehend that thousands and thousands of lives are annually lost, sacrificed to ignorance, often to prejudice. To see this illustrated in all its horror we have not to go far from home, for during the past year in our own good city of Montreal, close upon 1000 lives were sacrificed to that terrible scourge, Small Pox, nearly every one of which might have been saved had vaccination and re-vaccination been performed.

We meet to day, gentlemen, in this beautiful building, and in this spacious lecture room for the first time. The Faculty of Medicine feeling the inconveniences to which the students were placed last session, not having proper accommodation, determined to