

CANADA HEALTH JOURNAL.

A Monthly Record of Sanitary Progress.

VOL. XII.

JANUARY, 1890

No. 1.

POPULAR ESSENTIAL MEDICINE—PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

THE Medical and Surgical Reporter, an old established Medical Weekly of Philadelphia, says: "The crying want is the better education of the public in hygiene." This appears to be the universal opinion of both the medical press and the profession. Ignorance of the simple natural principles of health is probably to-day the most prolific cause of disease. The British Medical Journal, on the spread of infection, says: "Unfortunately much too frequently it is the result of gross ignorance." In a recent address by the Mayor of Concord, N. H., he said: "The urgent need now seems to be the more thorough education of the public in regard to sanitary requirements.

No one probably will deny that at the present time one of the greatest, if not the greatest, public need is the instruction of the masses of the people in that part of advanced medical knowledge which relates to the prevention of disease and the preservation and prolongation of human life, especially of infantile life. While for the most part medical knowledge must essentially be confined to the few who make it a life study, much of that part of it termed preventive medicine, or in other words, public and individual hygiene, is simple and easy to comprehend and should be public property. The wider it is known the better for the public—for the race.

When man lived in a more natural state—in caves in the forests or tents in the fields, roaming about in absolute freedom—he was safely enough guided in the acquirement of the essentials of his health and life by his natural instincts alone. Now after thousands of years of progress, in his entirely changed life, when with thousands and hundreds of thousands of

his fellow creatures he congregates into communities which dwell in practically impervious habitations that shut out the essential fresh air provided in such unlimited abundance; when the accumulated waste products of the active life of these enormous communities befoul the air and the water and even the food he consumes; when he clothes himself in a variety of fashions, which, considering not the functions of life, does much to obstruct and destroy them; and when to keep even with his fellows in the competitions which surround him he rushes all too soon to life's end, or in an accumulated wealth of idleness decays into disease and death; now, in this entirely changed and unnatural state, the instincts of his natural state no longer guide him, indeed do not exist, and were they still in existence would be no longer of use to him. In his present advanced condition, reason might be supposed to guide man in the ways of preserving his health and life, but in his headlong progress of centuries, while he has crushed out instinct he has not properly exercised his reason,—not even acquired the knowledge upon which to base reason, or at least not in this behalf. As Dr. Skene says, in his admirable work on "Education and Culture as related to the Health and Diseases of Women:" "The human race suffers because it has broken away from the laws of instinct, and not yet learned to fully obey the laws which a higher brain development has imposed. More than half of the misery and suffering which torture human beings comes from errors of judgement and reason; the faculties of the brain were intended to guide men in their life-work, but because of unfavorable education and misdirected