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Criticism and News.**

Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms. All Letters and Communications to be addressed to the "Editor Canada Lancet, Toronto."

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THE PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT OF MANKIND.

The physical improvement of mankind is no new problem. From a remote period it has received more or less attention; but not until our own time has it received that attention which its importance demands. Gradually this problem, in one form and another, has been forcing itself upon the attention of thoughtful minds, until now it has come to the front as a question of the first magnitude. To this end all civilized governments make money appropriations, and in various ways promote sanitary work. All this is highly gratifying; no better evidence could be afforded of the spread of knowledge. The common schools of a country are the most powerful agents employed in sanitary reform. Filth, no less than superstition, is the patrimony of the ignorant. Witness the opposition of the ignorant masses of Spain, Italy, and our own country, to necessary sanitary measures, in the present terrible visitations. Wholesome sanitary conditions are not only evidences of advanced civilization, but are part and parcel of civilization itself.

The physical improvement of the race through improved surroundings, presents an attractive field to the philanthropist. In none are good results more fruitful or more self-satisfying. It implies less disease, less suffering, and saving of time and the expenses incident to sickness; it means more power for the wage-earner, more food and clothing,

and more home cheer and comfort. Such are a few of the blessings that unfailingly come to mankind through the adoption and practice of well-known sanitary laws. Sickness, suffering, and premature death are seen on every hand in all lands, even in the most favorable to health and longevity. Especially is this true of the young, of whom one-fourth die before it can be said they have commenced to live, and hence, so far as human eye can see, were born to no purpose, leaving the pain, sorrow, labor and expense incident to their birth, life, and death, wholly uncompensated. Of the number who survive the earlier years of infancy, a large per centage die before reaching maturity; another large per centage are cut off in the earlier years of manhood and womanhood. Early death is the rule, and ripe old age the exception. The remedy for all these ills, the sanitarians tell us, lies in improved modes of living—cleaner surroundings, abundance of food, better clothing, and more comfortable dwellings.

Good and commendable as all this is, it does not meet the whole case. In the present day, thousands are living surrounded by sanitary conditions as favorable as can reasonably be looked for. They are well fed, well clothed, and well housed; but are they free from sickness? do they rear their young, and die of old age? All these blessings they have in a fuller degree; but they, too, are sick, lose their children, and die before old age overtakes them. True, the cottage of the poor is, *par excellence*, the home of infantile disease, contagious diseases, consumption, and kindred affections; but the palaces of the rich are by no means exempt. Possessed of all that money can do for them, even they have been unable to solve the problem—how to live out their allotted three score and ten years, to say nothing of the additional years of promise through extra vigor of constitution. Hence we see that outward conditions, however beneficial, are of themselves inadequate to raise the standards of health and longevity to the degree intended by an overruling Providence. It could never have been intended that half the race should perish before reaching years of usefulness, and that but a few of the other half should die of ripe old age. Clearly enough there are elements of destruction other than hunger and dirt at work, and it behooves us to search them out, in order to be able to shun them, and induce others so to do.