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MALARIA OR BAD AIR.

Read before the recent Maryland Sanitary Convention, by W. C. Van Bibber, M.D., and published in the *Sanitarian* by permission of Maryland State Board of Health, from advanced sheets of forthcoming Annual Report.

The subject of Malaria is an extensive one. In this paper it will be divided into that malaria which is found in dwellings, showing its effects in domestic life, and into that malaria which spreads over wide districts of country, and shows its effects among the inhabitants of those districts. There are general principles and laws which govern the atmosphere everywhere, whether it is good or bad, and these, it will be seen, have something to do with the question of malaria; but an attempt will be made in this paper to arrive at some conclusions concerning the impurities of the air immediately within the jurisdiction of this State Board of Health.

The meaning conveyed by the word malaria amongst physicians, as well as with the public, has recently undergone some change. Whereas, formerly, the word was kept within the meaning of its derivatives, now it is not used to express a cause, but as a name of a disease, and that disease is the most prevalent, and may be said to be the most fashionable one of the day. At the same time it is used as a prefix or adjective, as malaria-typhoid or typho-malarial, with the intention to qualify the supposed influence which it exerts on all other diseases, more or less, according to

its own peculiar laws. Within my own recollection the word was once more restricted in its application. Less than twenty years ago it was never used in connection with a case of disease which originated, and was treated in the hilly portion of this State. How different is it now! At present there are cases of disease found in every locality throughout the State, in what should be well appointed towns, as well as in the country, which are termed malaria, or malarial fever, and for which no other adequate cause or classified name can be found. This is so generally the case that physicians have been charged by the public with having hobbies, and with using the word malaria as an expression to cover or conceal their ignorance of some unknown cause for those effects which they evidently see before them. This is a serious charge against physicians, and is one which should be explained. If there is any foundation for this charge, one of three things must be true. Either it must be admitted that formerly it was a mistake to restrict the meaning of the word, or that at present the habits of building and living are so changed as to render the extended meaning of it necessary; or else, the physicians must declare that there is an error now in attributing prevailing symptoms to this cause, and calling the disease "malaria." It may be a difficult thing to show which one of these propositions should be accepted, and this difficulty is to be regretted. It would certainly be an interesting and profitable