

INSANITY AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

INSANITY (as well as crime, to which subject we recently drew attention) we contend is intimately related to the public health. Whatever measures tend to promote the public health, tend to prevent insanity and the increase of it which is complained of almost everywhere. Hence, to prevent disease is to prevent insanity. In this special connection, in writing of measures for preventing disease and promoting the public health, we do not allude so much to that municipal control which bears upon sewerage, scavenging, water and milk supply, &c., as to measures employed for instructing the public in the value and importance of healthy living—healthy habits of life; instructing them not only through the schools (a good and certain process but affecting only or chiefly future generations and not the present one), but also by means of abundance of correct health literature scattered abroad, and when possible, health lectures, together with regular and frequent reports of sickness and death rates in the various municipalities, showing that where most causes of disease prevailed, either individual or municipal, there would be found the highest mortality and the most sickness.

We do not know how far our contention in this regard is recognized in the management and treatment of the insane by the Asylum physicians, but it is not generally recognized by the public, although it is clear that disease of different organs, caused by erroneous habits of life—by improper living, gives rise to different

forms of insanity; and therefore, as we have said, to prevent disease is to prevent insanity.

The eminent authorities, Bucknill and Tuke, say that, "No physician of much experience in this department of medical science will be likely to deny that disordered states of the stomach, the intestines and the liver, do frequently constitute the remote causes of cerebral disease."

Jacobi and other physicians of eminence are of opinion that disordered bodily states account altogether for the causation of mental disease. Maudsley says: "I doubt not that an acute nose might be trained to recognize insanity by its odor in some instances. The excretions from the body are sometimes particularly offensive." The offensive excretions are undoubtedly caused by erroneous habits of living. At a recent meeting of the Medical Hospital Society in Paris, notes of a number of cases of insanity caused by Bright disease (of the kidney) were submitted. Treatment of the kidney disease caused improvement in the mental condition, while on the other hand, if the treatment was discontinued, the mental disturbance reappeared. Prevention of the kidney disease by proper living, we need hardly write, would have prevented the insanity.

All measures then for promoting the public health, whether of a coercive or of an educational character, not only prevent disease and premature death but also prevent both crime and insanity.

ON THE VALUE OF SULPHUROUS ACID DISINFECTION.

MUCH has recently been said and written as to the value of sulphur fumes as a disinfectant, and doubt has been thrown on the efficacy of this very old agent. In the Toronto Globe recently a medical practitioner questions the usefulness of this method of disinfection. All this leaves the public mind very unsettled,

and indeed dissatisfied with the whole process of disinfection, while it creates a doubt in the mind of inspectors and other health officers.

In the September JOURNAL we gave a communication from the able Secretary of the Michigan State Board of Health (which was however not properly credited to him