

Though a commonplace saw, it is an old one and a true, that "prevention is better than cure;" and it applies more directly to our occupation than to any other. No one of course supposes that all or nearly all diseases can be prevented. So long as erring humanity exists, disease will prevail, more or less; but that a very large proportion of the prevailing diseases may be prevented, no one I suppose will deny. Strictly speaking, it may be said there is but one disease, which in its essence is not preventable, namely, old age, which is indeed hardly in the proper sense a disease at all. There are many diseases however, of which we can conceive the possibility of prevention in the future, of the etiology of which we as yet know but little; hence the present division into preventable and non-preventable disease. It is quite reasonable to believe that with additions to our knowledge as to their causes, the ratio of the former to the latter will constantly increase. Mr. Simon, the well known medical health officer, Great Britain, and we have no better authority than Mr. Simon, in 1871, writes, "It seems certain that the deaths which occur in this country are fully a third more numerous than they would be if our *existing* knowledge of the chief causes of disease were reasonably well applied throughout the country." He estimates that 120,000 *preventable* deaths take place annually in England and Wales. Now, I take it that Mr. Simon estimates that this proportion of deaths may be prevented by the application of proper *Public Health* laws. What proportion then of deaths arising from inflammations and numerous forms of chronic disease may be prevented by individual hygiene? Probably another one-third. Then Mr. Simon speaks of our *then existing* knowledge; as our knowledge in this respect increases, probably a still larger proportion of deaths may be prevented. "Not yet," said Dr. Osborne, Vice-President of an Association for investigating the preventable causes of disease, at a recent meeting of the Association. "Not yet," was there by any means a full comprehension of the slow, silent, and disastrous consequences of the habitual use of adulterated food and drink, of the very lights burnt, and, as regarded certain colours, of the very clothes worn. Rooms were decorated with papers whose delicate and beauteous hues charmed the eye, while there was effluent from them a deadly poison. It had yet to be learned how much of chronic ill-health was due to these respective causes, and how far change of air owed its salubrious effects to an escape from these noxious influences."

Numerous examples of the benefits of sanitary measures are upon record, on the other side of the Atlantic, wherein the