

Dr. HINGSTON read the following report:

STATISTICS AND HYGIENE.

The committee on Statistics and Hygiene have to report that, as regards the former, this country is now an almost unexplored field, and as regards the latter, no distinct and definite views are held, except in the practicable application of them by physicians and others engaged in the art of preserving health, and of warding off disease. For these reasons the committee require to make observation that might otherwise appear too elementary, and will reverse the order in which they occur.

For purposes of practical utility, Hygiene has been divided into general and special, or into public and private—relating to those laws which regulate the life of the individual, the application of these laws to the sanitary wants of a community, or to each individual composing that community. A subject of such vast moment has not received at the hands of medical writers that attention its importance demands. Ever and anon a disease sweeps with fatal strides over a portion of the earth's surface, when measures are adopted to stay its dreaded course or be relieved of its presence. But doubts have arisen whether measures ill-considered and hastily adopted, have not done much to aggravate the evils they were intended to alleviate. Of the necessity for some general laws on the subject there can be no doubt. Moses, the Law-giver, inculcated the care with which diseases occurring by infection and otherwise are to be prevented. Those laws were imposed upon the people, and were enforced with vigour. Although some portions of them were evidently intended to the land in which the Israelites then lived, and the circumstances in which they were placed, yet, after a lapse of so many ages, we cannot but admire the sanitary code which drew the distinction between clean and unclean beasts—which forbade the eating of blood—which was intended to prevent the spread of skin and infectious diseases generally—which prevented the accumulation of human excretions and emanations, and which prevented man when sick, or, when dead, becoming a source of disease and death to his fellow-man. Beyond Holy Writ, and less perfect than Holy Writ, we first meet in the writings of Hippocrates, in his Essays on "Airs, Waters, and Places." We need not here allude to the ancient Latin authors who here and there inculcate hygienic precepts. Within the memory of living man, public health, as a distinct branch of medical science, was unknown. Here and there, throughout Europe, we find disjointed attempts, by municipal and other corporate bodies, to preserve the health of those they govern. But the first successful effort was made in France to make the health of the people the first care of the Government. At the beginning of this century, under the first Napoleon, a Council of Health was formed, to superintend the sanitary operation in the capital, and, half a century later, the whole of France was placed under the surveillance of Central and Departmental Councils. In Great Britain matters moved slowly, and it was not until Doctor Southwood Smith urged the importance of sanitary laws, that the Government became fully alive to their necessity. The Nuisances Removal Act, followed by the Baths and Wash-houses Act, the Town's Improvement Clauses Act, and the Public Health Act of just twenty years ago. The latter

Act was productive of vast good, and the death rate of eight towns in England decreased from 30.5 per 1000 to 24.6 per 1000, a decrease in round figures of 6 per 1000.

The Common Lodging House Act, the Laboring Classes Lodging House Act, the Internment Act, and a Vaccination Extension Act and others have been passed, but a concise, yet comprehensive law for all sanitary purposes has yet to be introduced to the Legislature of Great Britain.

In the United States of America progress has been but partial. In 1866 the State of New York resolved itself into a Sanitary district composed of the Counties of New York, King, West Chester and Richmond. The time for action was not too soon, for the mortality in some districts was terrible. But the result of the labours of the Sanitary Commission, in the City of New York alone, in one year, was remarkable. 3,152 lives less were lost in the city than in the year preceding, notwithstanding the increased population. Yet it was a season of incessant rains and excessive humidity throughout a wide extent of country, the larger towns suffering an unusual amount of sickness.

If the state of matters in Great Britain and the United States was so bad, it is scarcely necessary to add that, in Canada, legislation has been confined to a single Act, passed in a period of alarm, and only intended to deal with epidemics as they occurred. Yet is there no branch of science more important than that which relates to man's physical and moral condition, which deals with the external physical and chemical agents on which man's health or life depends. And particularly in Canada, where persons are exposed to a new set of influences, which may shorten or prolong life, benefit or injure health, cure or cause diseases, in proportion to the manner in which they are understood.

In Canada, one of the healthiest climates in the world—the mortality in some of the cities is very great, and the necessity for action is urgent. Here and there in Canada certain municipalities have taken steps to remedy existing evils, but their efforts are too partial in action and too limited in their sphere to be productive of any important advantages. A necessity exists for the introduction by the General Government—or simultaneously by the Local Governments—of a comprehensive system of sanitary laws, not so complete, perhaps, as those of the Mosaic code, nor so severe in the punishment of any violation of them. The details of such Bill or Bills will, with the permission of this Association, engage the attention of this committee.

The report on Vital Statistics will be submitted at a later period of the session.

W. H. HINGSTON, Chairman,  
W. BAYARD,  
WM. CANNIFF,  
G. E. FENWICK,  
JAMES THORBURN.

On motion, the report was received and laid on the table for future consideration.

NAMING COMMITTEE.

The following committee was appointed to nominate officers for the Association: For Quebec—Dr. Worthington, Marsden, Beaubien, Fraser, Rosseau. For Ontario—Dr. Berryman, Victoria College; Dr. Thorburn, Toronto School of Medicine; Dr. Henry, Ottawa; Dr. Sullivan, Kingston; Dr. Martin, Kin-