

# THE CANADA HEALTH JOURNAL.

(PUBLIC HYGIENE AND STATISTICS.)

Vol. V.

TORONTO, MARCH, 1881.

No. 6.

## STATE MEDICINE.

SPEECH OF THE HON. SENATOR DR. W. H. BROWSE, IN THE SENATE, JANUARY 25, 1881.  
—COSTS OF SICKNESS AND DEATHS; PROFITS OF PUBLIC SANITATION; EXPERIENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES.

(From *The Ottawa Citizen*.)

In calling attention to the important subject of health legislation, I am not treading upon new ground. The path has been trodden and well marked. More than 2,000 years ago Plato, in his great work of organization for the government of the city, gave a most important position to the State physician. Without this officer, and the most efficient that could be secured, as a chief of a department of health, the government, in his opinion, was not and could not be complete. What those functions were which this great statesman required the State physician to perform we gather from the writings of Hippocrates, the contemporary of Plato. Hippocrates was appointed State physician to Athens, and greatly aided in promoting her greatness. He laid down the following instructions:—

“When you have selected the city for your future residence, consider well its situation, how it lies to the winds and the rising of the sun—whether north and south or east and west—consider also attentively the water which the inhabitants use, whether marshy and soft or hard and running from elevated and rocky situations, and then if saltish and unfit for use. Also the ground, whether it be naked and deficient in water, or wooded and well watered; also whether it lies in a hollow or is elevated and cold, and then as-

certain the mode of living of the inhabitants, and their pursuits. If you have thoroughly investigated these matters then you will have no difficulty in understanding all the diseases prevalent in the city and how they manage them.”

Here we have, more than 2,000 years ago, an eminent statesman modelling his government, and, when defining its several departments, marks out as one of the most important that of State Medicine. We also find his intimate friend and counsellor, Hippocrates (the father of medicine), organizing and controlling that department. And, from the above quotation, we learn how graphically this great Minister of the department of health laid down the salient points for the guidance of his subordinate officers. A writer remarks that we have come to realize in our own time, in the more important features of a liberal government, many of the characteristics of the successful republic of Plato, but, in the organization of the department of State medicine, we have as yet failed to realize the model Health Board of Hippocrates. The subject of health legislation is not only important and apparent, but, in order to appreciate its full value, it will be necessary to consider some of its bearings in detail. I shall ask the indulgence of this hon. House while I briefly refer to the following points: What is hygiene? What nations have legislated for public health? What has been accomplished by such