

MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT

SANITATION: AN IDEAL AND A
REVIEW.*
(Concluded.)

The next topic touched on was an ideal for the systematic management of the sick of all classes, but especially the contagious sick in our communities. There was no comparison in the system of managing the sick in private houses and in properly constructed hospitals; the latter was so much more perfect. In the well-built hospital everything was at hand at a moment's notice—proper beds, correct ventilation, uniform temperature, skilled and able nursing, correct supplies of food, good water, and constant medical supervision. Moreover, for contagious cases, the hospitals could be constructed and conducted in a manner free from spread of contagion. A grand reform in sanitation, therefore, would come when all the evils arising from the present mixed system of sick houses and sick hospitals were abolished, when maudlin sentiment in regard to the management of the sick had no argument; and when recovery from sickness on the part of everyone became the true business of life, conducted in such a way that no sick person should be a peril to friends, neighbors, or to those that might succeed them in the houses where they lived. The idea set forth was that all communities, according to numbers statistically required, hotel-hospitals, comfortably and even elegantly furnished, should be erected with everything that was necessary for the sick in any kind of disease. The hotel hospitals should be conveniently planted for the services of everyone, so that if a person was ill from acute disease he should be able to find a room in one of them where he could be looked after either by his own medical attendant and friends or by the medical officers of the place, and where he could secure every necessity for the management of his illness. No private house would then become the center of infection, or be darkened by the gloom that always attended the part of a house in which death has been a visitor. All that might be done with less expense than was now devoted to the inferior management of sickness in the private dwelling. For purely contagious cases a special system should be adopted. Instead of taking such cases in the upper rooms of private houses, there should be light, elegant, small hospitals placed at proper distances on the tops of special houses, with lifts for taking the sick into them; with every facility for free ventilation through them, and with the further provision that from the roofs of these infectious hospitals themselves gas-fire shafts should be built,

so that all the air that circulated into them from the outside windows and ventilators should be drawn up into the shafts, moving through the purifying air on its way. In that manner the fire itself would draw off as well as consume all those particles of disease which disseminated through the private house, become so frequently the cause of disease. He had himself constructed a model of a hospital of that nature, and had hopes of seeing it in practical operation before long.

As to ventilation, towns themselves should be ventilated, and to secure good ventilation it was necessary to make a proper course for the winds through the streets; and, secondly to secure as far as possible that ventilation which sprang from vegetation. These facts were of vital importance in the construction of new towns; but they could be introduced even into more ancient places by the bringing of air from heights, compressing it when necessary, and letting it pass in the ordinary form, or ozonized, through close streets and alleys.

Sir Benjamin proposed the making of footways and planting flowers and small trees on the roofs of houses, making gardens there, with roadways along which foot-passengers could pass, from which the letter service could take place, the water-engines work in case of fire, and all smoke be readily consumed by means of gas furnaces placed at convenient distances.

Turning to the question of the best mode of the disposal of the dead, he recanted some of his earlier views on this matter, and explained that while he still retained a liking for Sir Seymour Haden's earth-to-earth burial, he was, on the whole, favorable to cremation, and thought, at all events, it ought to be supported. It was but fair to those who saw its advantages that every cemetery, if not every churchyard, should be supplied with a crematorium. If that were the case the yard in the vicinity of the church or chapel might be the spot where the last remains were removed from the earth without any detriment to those who lived. Not a single change need remain in what existed except in the erection of the most perfect crematory furnaces, where the body would pass into the fire.

On the topic of ideal foods and drinks the speaker dwelt at some length, urging the immediate reform of all places where animals were killed for food, the better inspection of such animals, and the better preparation of food derived from them. He suggested that a great reform in food ought to come from the transmuting of vegetable substances used as food into edible substances, having all the qualities of animal food, both as regards nutriment, flavor, and every other quality. As to drinks, we had in our possession from nature the only one drink required, viz water. That, purified, admitted of no improvement. The last great sanitary ideal dwelt upon had relation to education, both body and mind. He insisted upon such education starting from the earliest life. It should become a part of the national learning and the first part. Children

should be by nature sanitarians, and sanitary principles should enter into their learning as an ordinary process. The Jews, to some extent, admitted it. With them sanitation, quite away from the science of it, has become a part of their national nature, and by that they had lived under the most disadvantageous circumstances, showing the highest vitality of any other nation on the earth.

In conclusion he urged that education is the first principle demanded in the fulfillment of all detail. He did not mean education in the mere matter of reading, writing, and arithmetic; he did not mean education in the extreme accomplishments of what was called civilization, but he meant education in the laws of life and organization, and in those secondary forces which we called social and economical. These primary or secondary lessons would ultimately lead men and animals to their true places on the earth; to their true relations with each other; to the living but inanimate vegetable world, on which they depend for their subsistence; and to perfected health and happiness. Then selfishness, the darkest side of ignorance, would cease, and it would be learned that individual prosperity of the highest order was only possible in and with the prosperity of all mankind.

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*An address delivered by Sir Benjamin W. Richardson before the closing meeting of the Sanitary Conference at Manchester, England, and printed in the Building News