

The first duty of such an association is to educate public opinion. Many important sanitary reforms cannot be effected without the aid of legislation. A paternal despotism might force such reforms upon an unwilling people, but in a free country such legislation will only be granted when those who demand it are sufficiently backed up by the force of public opinion. This point cannot be too clearly kept in view, or too persistently enforced. When private individuals or even the members of a public association, move in such matters, unless strongly supported by the press and the public, they are sure to be looked upon as busy bodies who cannot be content to let well enough alone but *will* go poking about and stirring up unpleasant things that nobody wants to hear about. Very few persons have any intelligent conception of the necessity for sanitary reforms. It is only when an outbreak of typhoid or diphtheria or small-pox occurs that they are stirred up to a temporary interest in the matter. Then they are active in denouncing the authorities and demand that the immediate, or perhaps accidental, cause of the epidemic or particular case be removed from their own immediate neighbourhood at least. After that is done, or supposed to be done, no more is heard of them until another outbreak occurs. The more subtle causes of disease which exist in the general conditions under which life is lived, and which render such outbreaks possible while they prepare the human body to succumb to them are hardly ever thought of except by specialists. The seeds of disease like the seed of grain can only germinate when the conditions are favourable. Many of these conditions are now known to science and it is possible to control them if the proper means are employed. New discoveries are every day being made which render it more possible to control them. There seems no reason to doubt that the time will come when medical science will become preventive rather than curative. That time will not come, however, so long as the work is left wholly to medical men, sanitary engineers, and a few others. Preventive medicine and sanitary science are almost interchangeable terms. There is therefore urgent need for the Sanitary Association to be up and doing, and we hope soon to see them come to the front again and lead in the fight against dirt, disease, and death.

NEUROLOGY.

The Contagion of Murder: A Study of Criminal Anthropology.

Translated from Thèse de Doctorat du Dr. Paul Aubry, Paris.

The interest specially relating to this article for Canadians at the present time is that, as one often hears remarked, there seems to be an epidemic wave of crime sweeping over the American continent at the present time. It were time that the question be seriously considered whether there should not be a limit to the freedom of the press regarding the publication of itching hews for itching ears. Personally we think that much of what is called in newspaper parlance, *live* news were much better dead, dealing as it often does with *dead subjects*.

The following translation well expresses modern views on the subject:—"The astonishing facility with which crimes are committed, the almost absolute similarity in the means of execution, the return, so to speak, periodically of certain murders induced Dr. Aubry to look into the cause and mysterious connections which bind these different conditions together. Now, this marked psychological phenomenon is not the result of mere imitation, although one might at first be led to think so. There is more, it is a combination of four very distinct terms: Suggestion, imitation, heredity, contagion; the whole of which constitute the principal elements of an epidemic.

Epidemic murder has been demonstrated by history; but it is only a few years since the truly pathological nature of these epidemics has been understood. Encouraged by the example of his masters, M. Aubry has not feared to add a stone in this great work. He has treated with authority this question so full of interest, so great in consequences. His work is divided into three parts: in the first place he has studied the contagion of murder in its general methods; he has searched out what were their chief factors, and under this head has reviewed the family, the prison, the sight of executions, the description, etc. In the second part he has treated of the contagion of crime in some of its special methods, vitriol, revolver, poisoning, criminal butchery. Finally in the third he examines epidemics and endemics.

We will not follow the author in the examination of these different questions supported by num-