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**ON FREE HEALTH REPORTS: AN ADDRESS TO THE MEDICAL PROFESSION OF CANADA.**

BY EDWARD PLAYTER, M.D., OTTAWA.

Robert Farquharson, M.D., M.P., long a prominent member of the Parliament of Great Britain, at the late seventeenth annual congress of the Sanitary Association, of which he is president, said: "The foundation of all effective progress in preventive medicine must be education." Indeed it has now been found out in Great Britain that much greater progress can be made by educating the masses than by trying to coerce them.

In Canada, our Provincial Legislatures may enact laws and local boards of health may be organized by hundreds, and, although all this is a good beginning and essential, much more still remains to be done. Sanitary work is but begun when good laws are passed and local boards organized. These do not create the public realization of their usefulness. Health acts are now in advance of the public feelings. The people often, instead of welcoming them, take their enforcement as an intrusion and interference with individual rights and liberties. The masses of the people are not disposed to inconvenience themselves by keeping their body and premises clean and their infected family isolated to gratify the whim of their neighbors,

or even their lawmakers. They require to be taught that compliance with health rules and regulations will be a direct benefit to themselves, yea, money in their own pockets; that non-compliance with such rules and regulations is the cause, indeed the only cause, of disease, with all its attendant pains, expenses, and loss of time: that wherever there is a high mortality or a high sickness rate, there surely will be found unsanitary conditions or environments which demand attention.

In this education of the people, although not at all akin to the education of the schools, it is very desirable that a spirit of emulation be stirred up, in order that the various districts or municipalities shall vie with each other in showing a low death rate and a "clean bill of health" by keeping themselves free from epidemic and other diseases.

It is and has long been the universal opinion of sanitarians that the basis of all public health work and progress, both educational and coercive, is a system of health statistics—of births, marriages, and deaths. Beyond this it has become clear, in recent years, that for the best or even fair preventive progress statements or reports (not exactly statistics, for they cannot practically be complete or accurate), monthly or oftener, of prevailing diseases, especially of any outbreak or cases of infectious disease of importance, are absolutely essential. It will not do to wait for the death returns. Not only the local boards, but the central organization should be early informed of any such diseases.