

cult to understand the devious ways of this peculiar body. From their action, however, it is clearly evident that they have not risen to a realization of the fact that the primary object of the practice of medicine is to prevent disease rather than to cure sickness.

The paths leading from Hippocrates to Jenner were dark and the ways were devious, but great is the army of Æsculapians who have added each their quota to the solution of the problem of how to prevent disease, and, as a result of their united contributions, we can point with pride to victories achieved, all of which have prolonged life and benefited mankind generally.

In order rightly to comprehend the present and intelligently anticipate the future of "state medicine" it is necessary to briefly review the past and thus learn of the evolution of public health matters generally.

From earliest times the maintenance of the health has ever been the subject of man's care. Indeed, we may go further and say that in the Mosaic code there is evidence of the fact that man believed it to be the wish of the Almighty that he should preserve his body in health, for in that law are given minute directions for the cleanliness of the person, the purifying of houses, the exclusion of those suffering from contagious diseases and the care to be exercised in the selection of food. These and many other health questions were made a matter of religion and are considered as such by the orthodox Jew of to-day.

Subsequently, the Greeks and Romans, with a view to the improvement of their bodily condition, devoted themselves to physical culture. The Romans understood better than we do on this continent to-day the necessity for pure water supplies for their cities and the value of sewers and the proper disposal of sewage. Indeed, the Roman statesmen were the first to appoint district officers of health, assigning them according to population and charging them with duties which were chiefly those of public health.

With the advent of so-called Christianity, the Rabbinical laws were ignored, as apparently was the injunction of St. Paul—"Ye are the temple of God, if any man

defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy which temple ye are,"—and we find the monks and friars devoting themselves to acts of mercy and charity by instituting hospitals for the care of the sick, but failing to impress upon the people the necessity for a proper care of the person and the observance of even the most rudimentary of health laws whereby their environment could be bettered. Disease came to be regarded as a fetish, while epidemics were but manifestations of the wrath of a Divine Being. This attitude of mind was one that parallels that which obtained in the days of savagery—and it might here be added that there is more than sufficient evidence to show that, even in what are considered intelligent quarters, a similar superstition prevails to-day. I have even heard mutterings of it in the legislative halls of Canada, and, unfortunately, the public press is not free from suspicion.

In Great Britain in mediæval times, conditions were no better, and the general insanitary state of London is well known. At the time of the first outbreak of cholera, 1831-2, the state of sanitary conditions was deplorable, and, notwithstanding the terrible effects of this scourge, it was not until the passing of the Public Health Act of 1858 and the establishment of a Public Health Department with Dr. Simon as first medical officer, that material progress was made in that country. This enactment was brought about by the earnest work of a devoted band of men and women under the leadership of Sir Edwin Chadwick. Eight years later, in 1866, a still further advance was made by the passing of the Sanitary or Public Health Act. It was not, however, until 1872 that the law made it compulsory for municipal authorities to appoint a medical officer of health; although Liverpool had appointed one in 1847, just a quarter of a century earlier, and the metropolis of London had followed in 1855. In the year 1872 the counties were divided into rural and urban districts. Hitherto there had been in the main only parish districts. In 1888, sixteen years later, county councils were authorized to appoint county officers of health, the act being made obligatory twenty-one years later with the introduction of the Housing and Town Planning Act.