POPULAR EDUCATION AND SANITARY PROGRESS.

BY

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Permanent sanitary progress depends upon two important factors: First, the execution of health laws embodying the important conclusions of sanitary science and enforcement by competent officials. Such laws must provide the common and vital conditions for public health and safety and must prevent the individual from endangering the health of his fellow man through ignorance, carelessness, cupidity, or from any cause whatsoever. Such laws are, on the whole, more numerous and satisfactory every year. Duties of health boards and inspectors are better defined and more adequately performed.

The second factor in sanitary progress is popular education and the intelligent co-operation of the mass of the people in all matters pertaining to public weal.

Popular intelligence is of special and vital importance in a republic like our own, where the people are free and self governing. Here in the long run everything depends upon the average man and the ordinary citizen. The masses of the people finally and directly or indirectly choose their law-makers and executives and in this way control the making and obedience to health laws and ordinances. In a monarchy the rulers may legislate according to the latest results of scientific research, and the people must obey whether they understand the reason for law and obedience or not. In this way the sanitary control of Berlin or St. Petersburg may be as a system more absolute and perfect than that of New York or San Francisco. But here, in the United States, the development of the individual man keeps pace with and must precede the growth of sanitary regulation and control.

No phase of the subject of preventive medicine, it seems to me, is so important as the problem of popular education in matters relating to the health of the individual and of the community. The greatest obstruction to the administration of all forms of health laws, statutes and ordinances, is the general and popular ignorance of health and hygiene. Health boards determine upon the conditions necessary to the welfare of the people, and then the people evade the laws in every possible way. This is due in many instances to selfishness, personal and financial interests, but primarily it is due to ignorance of the vital issues involved, of the relative interests and values on the life of the individual and of society.

General intelligence alone will make possible the individual hygiene of the consumptive so important to the welfare of the patient and of those about him. Again, popular education must teach people to demand uncontaminated food, milk, meat, vegetables, etc. The dairyman must learn

that it is of vital importance for his own health and the health of his family and his servants, and to his permanent financial interests, to destroy the diseased cattle in his herd, and to keep his dairy clean.

A significant example of the lack of appreciation of sanitary measures is shown in the attitude of many people even of average intelligence towards vaccination. History teaches us that vaccination is an almost sure preventive of a very fatal disease. An epidemic of small-pox produces an epidemic of vaccination. After this, care is relaxed. As one sanitarian has said, "out of sight, out of mind." Prejudice against vaccination grows, and another unexpected epidemic of the dread disease finds many children and even some adults entirely unprotected. It is not strange perhaps that the almost uncivilised foreigners in our great cities should resort to riot or bloodshed to escape obedience to health ordinances; but that the members of some of the most intelligent communities should seriously oppose the vaccination of all school children seems almost incredible. It seems all important that there should be a constant campaign of education, vigorously and steadily carried on in all possible ways, for the enlightenment of all present and prospective citizens upon matters pertaining to health.

This work of education can be accomplished through many channels. Perhaps there is no more important work to be done by our newspapers, periodicals and journals than the constant presentation and discussion of all matters pertaining to health.

State and local health boards can frequently do no greater service to the people they serve than by distributing very widely educational bulletins upon many topics.

Sanitation should be taught by the preacher from the pulpit, from the stand in scientific and popular lectures. Some one said years ago, "everybody ought to know as much about health as the doctors know, and the doctors ought to know a great deal more than they do." Too frequently the doctor knows more about disease than about health. Physicians should be enthusiastic educators in the department of hygiene, not only through formal and occasional lectures and publications, but in daily contact with their patients, and wherever opportunity offers. Physicians may help to educate people to the point where it will be quite as much the function of the medical profession to keep people well as to cure them when they are sick.

Finally, and without enumerating all the avenues for sanitary education, this class of subjects should be taught adequately and appropriately in all educational institutions from the kindergarten to the university. Of course, every form of encouragement, moral or financial, should be given to the establishment of special schools and laboratories