

He grew rapidly worse, and at 3 P. M. consciousness began to fail, and the end came at 11:45 P. M. after a period of calm.

W. D. H.

A BILL TO LENGTHEN LIFE.

It is interesting to see the universal interest that health matters are now provoking. It speaks well for the profession that the medical fraternity have finally improved upon the views of the law makers, and the public writers of the day.

As one of the most pleasing expressions in reference to the new bill, establishing a Department of Health, the following quotation from "Harper's Weekly" is one of the most convincing and irrefutable commendations which we have seen.

Surely, if a layman takes this strong position, it behooves every single medical man to exercise his utmost influence in obtaining pledges from his individual Congressman to support this all important measure.

It has been attacked by the patent medicine interests in a most misleading and cowardly way. The American Medical Association, for instance, which is only one of the many national bodies representing different phases in the study and propaganda for the uplifting of humanity, is branded as a trust. As Gov. Hadley, of Missouri, said in his address of welcome to the American Medical Association in St. Louis recently, "if this be a trust, give us more of them."

Unfortunately the lay press, which is largely dominated by patent medicine influence, on account of the enormous advertising which it gives newspapers, are all too easily influenced in the publication of sinister and misleading articles about the purposes and alleged results of this bill.

Every doctor and humanitarian who reads the straightforward, unvarnished recital of facts laid down in the appended article, should at once write to his Congressman, and forcefully put his views before the representative. By so doing our law makers will be made to realize the truths and wisdom of this measure. A disinterested opinion from a representative practitioner, who is known personally to his Congressman, will have more weight than all the lobbyists can possibly exert.

Write to your Congressman today!

At least fifteen years may be added in one generation to the average of human life throughout the country by the application of science to the prevention of disease, and the first step toward this consummation will be the enactment into law of the bill establishing a national department of public health that has been introduced in Congress by Senator Robert L. Owen, of Oklahoma. This measure is supported by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Academy of Medicine, the American Medical Association, the Committee of One Hundred of the American Federation of Labor, the National Grange, and various health bodies of the forty-six States. According to statistics 600,000 people die annually in this country from preventable causes, and 3,000,000 are disabled and thrown out of employment during variable periods of every year from sickness, the annual economic loss from this source amounting to more than \$1,500,000,000. Senator Owen points out that, of the national pension roll of more than \$150,000,000 per annum, three-quarters is due to illness and death from diseases that were preventable, and that the United States would now be saving an annual charge of \$100,000,000 in pensions, and might have already saved \$2,000,000,000 in that respect, had we been given the benefits of the administration of a Department of Public Health in the past. The Senator declares that the commercial value of the possible saving in life and efficiency in the country is easily \$3,000,000,000.

Senator Owen's bill provides that all

national departments and bureaus belonging to any department affecting the medical, surgical, biological, or sanitary service, except the departments of War and the Navy, shall be combined in one department to be known as the Department of Public Health, which shall be under the supervision of a Secretary of Public Health, to be appointed by the President, a Cabinet officer, by and with the consent of the Senate, with the same tenure of office as the other members of the Cabinet. Under the provisions of this bill there will be included in the scope of the new department the Bureau of Public Health and Marine Hospital Service; the medical officers of the Revenue-Cutter Service; the medical officers, surgeons and examiners of the Pension Office; all physicians and medical officers in the service of the Indian Bureau or the Department of the Interior at old soldiers' homes, at the Government Hospital for the Insane, and the Freedman's Hospital, and other hospitals of the United States; the Bureau of Entomology; the Bureau of Chemistry and Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture; the hospitals of the Immigration Bureau of the Department of Commerce and Labor; the emergency relief bureau in the Government Printing Office; as well as every other government agency for the protection of the health of the people, or of animal life.

The health bureaus of the Army and Navy departments are not included in the proposed health department for reasons of expediency, Senator Owen apprehending political opposition from these sources. "It would probably be impossible to pass a bill in face of the opposition of those who are connected with the medical service of the Army and Navy," he says, "and, moreover, the bureaus of health in those departments, being particularly dependent upon the military arm of the government, may be excluded from a department of public health, although I do not think they ought to be. When the proposed department is once established, however, and it sets a standard of sanitary science in relation to public health, it will exercise a cogent influence over the practice of all departments affecting the public health, including those having in charge the physical welfare of our soldiers and sailors."

The Committee of One Hundred sets forth the following reasons why this country should have a national department of public health: to stop the spread of typhoid fever through the drinking of sewerage-polluted water of interstate streams; to enforce adequate quarantine regulations, so as to keep out of the country plague and other similar pestilences; to supervise interstate common carriers, in so far as without such supervision they prove a menace to the health of the traveling public; to maintain a central organization of such dignity and importance that departments of health of other states and cities will seek its co-operation; to influence health authorities, state and municipal, to enact uniform legislation in relation to health matters; to act as a clearing-house of state and local health regulations and to codify such regulations; to draw up a model scheme of sanitary legislation for the assistance of state and municipal health officers; to gather accurate data on all questions of sanitation throughout the United States; to reduce the death-rate.

To reduce the death-rate is, of course, the ultimate purpose of all the preliminary efforts of the proposed national department of public health, and Professor Irving Fisher's report on "National Vitality," made to the National Conservation Commission, contains the most recent discoveries of scientific and medical men tending to that end. According to the report, money estimates of waste of life are necessarily imperfect and sometimes misleading; the real wastage may most fittingly be expressed in terms of human misery. Poverty and disease are twin evils, and each plays into the hands of the other, for from each springs vice and crime, and whatever diminishes poverty tends to improve health. The conservation of our natural resources—land, raw materials, forests and water—will provide the food, clothing, shelter and other means of maintaining healthy life, while the conservation of health tends to conserve and increase wealth.

Professor Fisher's researches emphasize the variability of mortality in different parts of the world. Recent statistics for India show that the average duration of life there is less than twenty-five years; in Sweden it is over fifty years; in Massa-

chusetts forty-five years. The length of life is increasing wherever sanitary science and preventive medicine are applied. In India it is stationary; in Europe it has doubled in three and a half centuries. The rate of increase in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was about four years a century; during the first half of the nineteenth century, about nine years per century; during the latter half of the nineteenth century, about seventeen years per century; while in Germany, where medical and sanitary science has reached its highest development, it was about twenty-seven years per century. The only comparative statistics available in this country are for Massachusetts, where life is lengthening at the rate of about fourteen years per century, or at half the rate of Germany.

"There is no need, however, of waiting a century for this increase," says Professor Fisher. "It could be obtained within a generation. Three-fourths of the mortality from tuberculosis, of which 150,000 Americans die annually, could be avoided. Eighteen experts in various diseases, as well as vital statisticians, have contributed data on the ratio of preventability of the ninety different causes of death

into which mortality may be classified. From these data it is found that fifteen years at least could be at once added to the average human lifetime by applying the science of preventing disease. More than half of this additional life would come from the prevention of tuberculosis, typhoid and five other diseases, the prevention of which could be accomplished by purer air, water and milk. The lengthening and strengthening of life can be secured through medical investigation and practice, school and factory hygiene, restriction of labor of women and children, the education of the public in both public and private hygiene, and through improving the efficiency of our municipal, state and national health service. Our national government has now several bureaus exercising health functions, which only need to be concentrated under one department to become co-ordinated parts of a great health service worthy of the nation."

In ironic comment on present conditions Mr. Owen said in the Senate the other day: "I recently sent 250,000 bulletins to farmers in Oklahoma on how to raise swine. I had no bulletins to send out on how to protect the health of children."

W. H. D.