

**Sanitary Institute of Great Britain, Congress at York : inaugural address, delivered 21st Sept., 1886 / by Sir T. Spencer Wells.**

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Wells, Spencer, 1818-1897.  
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**Publication/Creation**

[London] : [Kenny, printers], [1886]

**Persistent URL**

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*for the delivery  
from the Human body*  
CONGRESS AT YORK, 1886.



## INAUGURAL ADDRESS

BY

Sir T. SPENCER WELLS, Bart., F.R.C.S.,

PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS.

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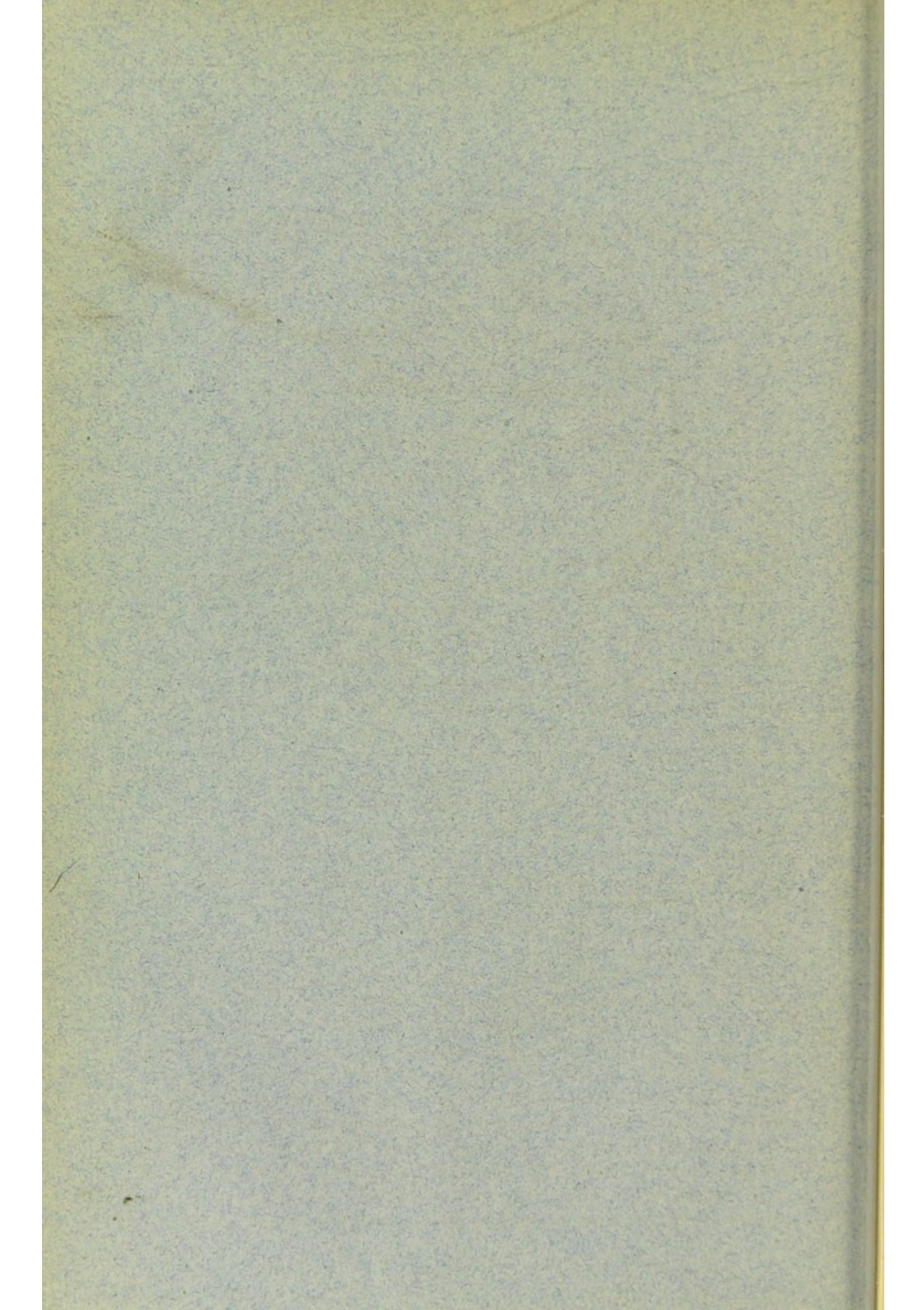
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# Sanitary Institute of Great Britain.

*Congress at York.*

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS

*Delivered 21st Sept., 1886,*

BY SIR T. SPENCER WELLS, BART., F.R.C.S.,

PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS.

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I HESITATED for several days before complying with the flattering proposal of the Council of the Sanitary Institute to fill the honourable position of President of this year's Congress, and to address you this evening. Although a worker in collateral Science and Art, I could not presume to appear before a meeting of sanitary experts as an instructor, and I must beg you while listening to me to consider that we are all engaged in making a joint effort to draw general attention to questions of vital importance to the public health, to diffuse information, to get the people to take an intelligent interest in sanitary matters, and to bring the governing powers into a disposition to give more effectual help in carrying out such reforms as are proved to be necessary by scientific investigators. With the feeling that this is our mutual relation I may proceed, and if I trouble you with the reiteration of some truisms, and the citation of facts already well known to many of you, I trust you will be patient with me in the hope that some of the seed which may be sown broadcast to-night may fall upon fruitful soil; and, if good, may so multiply that it may be sown again and again by others, and in good time influence the multitude.

A great deal of what, if I had time, I should like to say to-night has been already said by one or other of my predecessors in this chair. Richardson, one of the foremost of our sanitary reformers, began by an account of his researches and experiments on the origin of spreading or communicable diseases, and followed by displaying his popular "Ideal of a healthy people." He was, perhaps, the first to make generally known the grounds upon which Owen and Flourens calculated



that threescore years and ten, or fourscore years, should not be the extreme limit of human life; but that old age only begins at 70 years, mellowing down to a ripe old age at 85, and that the natural duration of human life, under perfectly healthy surroundings, ought to be 100 years, and might be occasionally carried on some fifteen or twenty years more. Chadwick, our revered Vice-President, eight years ago, though then almost an octogenarian, showed that he was as exact and earnest as he had always been in the sanitary work to which he has devoted his useful and honoured life. Even now, though approaching his ninetieth year, he still stimulates his juniors by his bright example. Before the end of this year two volumes of his works, speeches, and letters, edited by Dr. Richardson, will be published, and will be prized as the foundation of scientific sanitation, and as a valuable contribution to the history of our own time. Lord Fortescue, who for more than forty years has laboured in the cause of public health with a zeal which involved personal sacrifice, treated sanitary reform in this country in its administrative and legislative aspects. Galton, distinguished in the army as an officer of the Royal Engineers, and not less so in the Royal Society and in civil life, proved that his powers were equal to the wide range of the subjects before us. Then Humphry, honoured alike as practical surgeon and Cambridge Professor, enlightened us by his knowledge of many things which prevent the development of the human body, and lead to disease and too-early death. Rawlinson taught us what sanitary engineers can do by a better system of sewerage, drainage, and water-supply, in preventing sickness and prolonging life. He well said, "The strength and glory of a nation is not in standing armies and ironclad fleets, but in the health, well-being, and contentment of the people." And last year De Chaumont, with extraordinary exactness and minuteness, detailed statistical evidence of the effects of sanitary modifications of many conditions which affect the health of all classes of the population. In the hope that we may assist in the advancement of the grand object which animated these great men, and following the course cleared by them, it now remains for us to consider how sanitary improvements may be carried on still further by the co-operation of investigators, legislators, and administrators.

Any great sanitary improvement of the community must be the result of elaborate co-operation. We must have the combined action of the three great classes of investigators, legislators, and administrators, before we can effect any good result. And if we regard sanitary reform in these three aspects, we find that a great deal of the work of investigation



has been done, and that the work of legislation is lamentably deficient; while the work of administration cannot advance beyond the limits of legislation.

As regards the work of investigation, we may safely assert that it has hitherto been for the most part personal, and that the waste of labour has been enormous. It is only of late that this Institute has come in aid. Three-fourths of the fifty years that Southwood Smith, Chadwick, Farr, and Trevelyan were at work, they were well-nigh single-handed. Perhaps the foundation of such a body as the Sanitary Institute may be enough for them to be proud of; but more must follow, and it is to be hoped that before long we shall have, for the sake of life and health, an organisation as powerful as that which protects our property and our liberties. The Institute must develop into something grander and more powerful. The Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons have done and are doing much useful work; but the work is done more for the individual than the collective good. Without interfering with them—rather aiding them—why should we not have a College of Health—a College which would show our appreciation of the gift of life and our reverence for the Giver?

But, turning back for a moment, let us glance at what the advanced guards of sanitary science have already accomplished. It is bare justice to them from time to time to recount their services, and while we are encouraged by their success, we shall learn what remains for us to do. We have only to look carefully into the memorial volume of selections from the reports and writings of William Farr, published by the Council of this Institute, at the suggestion of Dr. Gairdner, to find a revelation of the mass of ignorance, prejudice, and folly which our early reformers had to expose, and of the variety and extent of their labours. It is a record which is honourable to all, and to him whose writings it enshrines it may serve as a monument more eloquent and touching than any brass or marble. What did we know of Vital Statistics fifty years ago? It was in 1837 that our Registration Act came into operation, and certainly no one could have more ably worked it or turned it to better purpose than Farr. It was from his Reports that it first became generally known that our death-rate was too high. We now know that the measures indicated, and taken as necessary to lessen mortality, have been so effectual that a large part of the gain of twenty years in the average duration of life in this country since the beginning of this century may be claimed for the registration period; and there can be little doubt that, if the provisions of the Registration Act were more strictly enforced, the prolongation of life would



be greater. Very few even of those well informed in sanitary matters are aware of the large proportion of the population now buried without the cause of death being properly certified. When Dr. Cameron introduced the "Disposal of the Dead Regulation Bill" in the House of Commons, in 1884, he showed that in England and Wales, more than 20,000 bodies in a single year were buried without any certificate whatever of the cause of death. In Ireland, there were more than 4,000 burials under the same circumstances, while in Scotland, in no fewer than 20 per cent. of the total number of deaths registered, the causes of death were uncertified. Even in Glasgow, not less than 9 per cent. of the total number of persons who died in that city in 1882 were buried without any certificate of the cause of death. Having learned the important results obtained by what we must confess to have been very imperfect registration, I desire in the strongest manner to urge attention to the necessity for more strict observance of the provisions of the Act by the public; and for more careful and accurate certificates from members of my own profession—a profession ever ready freely to assist the State when asked for information on any question affecting the public health and welfare.

Since our last meeting one of Farr's fellow-workers—a veteran reformer—has passed away. The name of Sir Charles Trevelyan will at once recur to you, and with it the thought of the vast amount of good he was able to accomplish. The principle underlying all his efforts—that of helping the poor to help themselves—is the right one. He knew that without health they could never succeed, and one of his main objects was to secure health for them in the least objectionable way. The President of the Metropolitan Provident Medical Association will give you some interesting details on this subject in a day or two.

When we speak of the prolongation of life, we think chiefly of the advantage to individuals, their better health, and their augmented power of enjoyment. This is a great deal. But it means more for the State. It may sound well to declaim against the money view of the subject as low and sordid; but it is not to be overlooked when we are apportioning merit for work done. A donation to the community of two or three millions would be looked upon as an extravagance. But what is the fact? During the forty-nine years that registration has been in force, and sanitary reforms have advanced with its annually increased information, about eight millions of people have been added to the population of the United Kingdom. We may fairly credit our reforms with a large proportion of this increase in numbers, and consequently of their money



value. The result on human happiness is not a matter of calculation, but a future industrial census will show in a very definite shape the effect of sanitation in raising the economic value of the population.

How much of this gain is due to the active and useful work of pure sanitation, and how much to medical and surgical work, it is unnecessary for me to discuss; but it would be a censurable omission on my part if I neglected to allude to the coincident progress made in the science and art of medicine and surgery. It would be easy to tabulate figures showing how the mortality of small-pox has been diminished by more universal vaccination; how hospital mortality in general, and in a number of different diseases, has been diminished, especially since the use of antiseptics, and by the improved methods of performing various surgical operations. I must not go into such details and statistics here, but I do claim for the medical profession of this country a considerable share in the gain to the State of increasing numbers of more healthy subjects. We cannot be far wrong if we put the average duration of human life in Great Britain half a century ago at about 30 years; now, according to the healthy life table, it is 49 years. the population in less than 50 years increased, as I have said, by some eight millions. Each individual of these millions was worth to the State, as is calculated, about £150. Say that only two millions out of the eight millions of increased numbers were the fruit of sanitary and medical work, their economical value was at least 300 millions of pounds, and that a clear gain. To this we must add that the productive powers of the population depend on labour, and that labour depends upon health. Let sickness come, men are disabled, their labour ceases, and the produce of labour is lost. Formerly it was calculated that a twenty-third part of the population was constantly sick, and the products of all that labour for the time necessarily withdrawn. A great deal of this sickness has been altogether prevented, and the duration of that which comes in spite of sanitation is lessened. Happily did Richardson give form and expression to the proverb, "National Health is National Wealth!" and well may Froude follow with his paraphrase, "The *Commonwealth* is the *Common health*, the common wellness," and add "No nation can prosper long which attaches to its *wealth* any other meaning."

Since the formation of the Sanitary Institute, although the progress of sanitary science has not been as rapid as we desire, yet its advances have been more readily measured. The annual meetings, the presidential and sectional addresses, and the papers read in the sections, have brought important



movements under notice; and as the Congress migrates yearly to new places, its information becomes more varied and trustworthy. We gather assurance of the generally improved moral and physical condition of the people. We find that infant mortality is lower; that education becomes more satisfactory as the principles upon which it should be conducted are better understood; that those who work are better paid, get wholesomer food, and dwelling-places more fit for human habitation. Increasing intelligence has given a claim to political rights, and developed an interest in political questions. Thrift is more common, and savings banks more used. It is barely 50 years since the general introduction of savings banks; yet by the last returns more than 45 millions of money stand to the credit of depositors in these trustee banks—while in the Post Office Savings Bank, only established in 1861, more than 44 millions belong to the industrial classes of the United Kingdom. Thus a total of more than 90 millions now represents the results of the thrift of the people during the past half-century. And co-operative associations show more and more, year after year, how well and quickly, when men begin to learn that life and health are worth looking after, they find out the means of taking care of themselves and of their material interests; and I think I am not going too far when I say that this Institute may be congratulated upon the success of what it has done tending to the recent diminution of drunkenness and crime.

With all this encouragement we may look hopefully to the future, and consider what are the most pressing subjects of inquiry, and which is the way of conducting our investigations that gives the greatest promise of success. The field is vast, but, as we have seen, it is not impenetrable; and obstacles are sure to yield to steady and well-directed attack. Facing the difficulties, what is our attitude? Our representative meeting here manifests that we are numerous; our Institute shows a certain amount of aggregated working power; but it is more a nucleus than a complete organisation. It may be effective as an investigating, deliberative, consulting, and examining body, but it has no directorial power, no agency for carrying out practically the measures which its collective wisdom has indicated. Crowds of sanitary volunteers hover about it, and make desultory attacks upon weak points, often with much waste of energy. "What we want is a central power," as Lord Brabazon wrote last month in the *Times* (August 30), "which shall regulate and control local action, so that no town or locality shall be able to neglect the public health, or, in endeavouring to purify itself, shall poison its neighbour. We



want a power which shall take a bird's-eye view of the whole question, and work not for the good of one locality only, but for the good of all." This is what we want, and what we must have some day. But, while we are waiting, an interim organisation of deliberative and administrative agency should be set up, as if a Ministry of Health were in power. The Local Government Board, too, with all its official completeness, like ourselves, may recommend, but cannot command. There seems to be a link missing between the knowledge of what is right and the power to apply it. This link is a Minister of Health. We have now only the elements of the organisation which I suggest; its formation is matter for consultation and arrangement, and probably might be accomplished without much delay. In the meantime, what are we to do? The last generation has done so much with means less efficient than we have at command, that we ought to do more than emulate the past. This Institute, united with the Parkes Museum, is bound, in my opinion, to induce all the others to make not only common cause, but joint action; or, failing in this effort, it may, by increased activity, in a short time cover the ground which they now occupy. This would at once make plain the folly and waste of division. This process of amalgamation has already begun by the union of the Parkes Museum with our Institute. The National Health Society, the Ladies' Sanitary Association, the Cremation Society, the Smoke Abatement Institution, and others of a like kind must follow; while such societies as that of the "Medical Men qualified in Sanitary Science," and the "Society of Medical Officers of Health," would find themselves more fitly placed and more usefully employed as sections of one united body than they now are. The Conference of Medical Officers of Health to be held to-morrow afternoon is, I trust, the beginning of a closer union between this important class of officers and the Sanitary Institute.

The active working of such a large group of philanthropic societies shows how constantly the interest in all sorts of sanitary measures has been increasing during the last twenty years, and how much it has been in the power of such feebly-supported societies to do. The official lists of names connected with them proves that there is nothing narrow nor sectarian in the way the work is carried on. And in calling to mind the beneficent influence that has been exercised by the Society of Arts through their publications and exhibitions, by the National Health Society through their pamphlets and popular lectures, by the homely instructions and friendly visitations of the Ladies' Sanitary Association, by the manifestation of sympathy of class with class in the efforts to secure recreation grounds



and open-air spaces, so striking to every one who walks along our streets and suburbs, and by the greater comfort which our smoke abators have secured for forced town-dwellers, we ought to make grateful recognition of so much useful service. Our great effort at present ought to be the concentration of working power and its economical direction. With this object attained, it will not be difficult to explain the motives for special contributions, and to collect them from a public which seldom turns a deaf ear when appealed to rationally. There are many investigations which require much time, which cannot be conducted by individuals, and which are costly. The Institute, with adequate funds, could form its commissions, send out its health challengers, have its own laboratories, museums, deliberative councils, exponents, and consultants—and all this not interfering with, but rather in aid of, recognised privileges or established authorities. If money enough were forthcoming, more than I have suggested could be done, and I cannot believe that we shall fail simply for want of money. Take the sum total of all the subscriptions and donations received by the whole group of Sanitary Societies, and how very small it is compared with the amounts thrown away daily upon the most trivial objects, and with the many millions of pounds worse than thrown away in unjustifiable wars! It is not the least of the gain we hope for after each Congress, that more direct and repeated enforcement of the conviction that individual advantage is bound up with all that improves the national health, will lead to more thoughtful discrimination, and more liberal support of worthy objects—that new labourers may be called into the field—that the old hands may be invigorated—and that wealthy philanthropists, who justly value their money by the amount of good they can do with it, may learn how, by an expenditure insignificant to them, an incalculable amount of good may be done, and how easily they may assist in the efforts to make our people healthier and happier, wiser and better. In this country the most brilliant instance of what I mean is the munificent legacy of Erasmus Wilson to the College of Surgeons, amounting to nearly £200,000. In America, a citizen of Baltimore has endowed that city with a University and Hospital by a bequest amounting to nearly a million and a half of our money. In New York, the Medical School of the Bellevue Hospital has been presented, by a wealthy inhabitant, with a pathological laboratory; and the College of Physicians has been provided with new buildings affording the best means of teaching and research, at a cost of £200,000 by Mr. Vanderbilt and members of his family; while an unknown donor has endowed a laboratory for the University Medical



College of the same city with the sum of £20,000. Well might my dear old friend Fordyce Barker last year, in his retiring address as President of the New York Academy of Medicine, rejoice in this growing tendency to regard wealth as a "trust to be used for the benefit of humanity," and we may join with him in the belief that an endowment of at least a million of dollars will be provided by some of his wealthy fellow-citizens so as to complete the requirements of an Academy of Medicine on a scale never yet attained on this side of the Atlantic. Such examples as these are pleasing evidence that, although this is said to be an age of machinery, of money getting, of selfish indulgence, of thoughtless waste, still it is an age in which men are not wanting who have proved that they well understand the responsibility entailed upon them by their riches—whether derived from their ancestors or gained by their own successful labours—and who can find their truest satisfaction and reward in endeavours to benefit their fellow-men and in the exercise of a careful foresight, so that the good they do may be continued and increase as time goes on.

In studying the various subjects to which the Institute has given attention, and the investigation of which it is still prosecuting, they may be conveniently arranged into five groups: 1, those which relate to the training and health of the population; 2, to their social comfort and well-being; 3, to the prevention of disease; 4, to the care of the sick; and, lastly, those relating to the disposal of human refuse and remains. Impossible as it is even to recall those subjects to your minds, there are a few points upon which I cannot refrain from a word or two of comment.

1. So far as concerns the mental and physical training of children, and giving women the option of other occupations than those of domestic life, I see no great cause for alarm. It is an age in which education—at any rate for the middle classes—must be pushed far beyond the limits which our fathers thought wide enough for us. Mere rule-of-thumb work is almost out of date, and there are so many industries in which scientific knowledge and exactness are requisite, that the want of early education cuts off a young man's chances of advancement. To engage in most of the recent applications of steam-power, electricity, magnetism, and chemistry—to be available in carrying out the complexities of engineering science—a workman must be something more than a mere machine. He must have head as well as hands—brain as well as muscle; and as uneducated brains are not worth more in the labour market than untrained muscle, we must be content to make some sacrifice in the culture. While we pity the few who



fall in the struggle, we must remember that there is no chance for those who stand still.

As for the outcry about the dangers from women taking up men's work, it is breath wasted. A great many failures will outweigh a few successes, and bring the balance right. For my own part I think women capable of a great deal more than they have been accustomed to do in times past. "To suckle fools and chronicle small beer" surely cannot be the chief end of woman. If overwork sometimes leads to disease, it is more morally wholesome to work into it than to lounge into it. And if some medical practitioners have occasionally observed cases where mental over-strain has led to disease of mind or body, I cannot deny that I also have at long intervals seen some such cases. But for every such example I feel quite sure that I have seen at least twenty where evils equally to be deplored are caused in young women by want of mental occupation, by deficient exercise, too luxurious living, and too much amusement or excitement. After marriage, the domestic duties which are the pride and happiness of most English women keep the great majority of them free from the very slightest desire to encroach upon any part of the work or occupations of men. A few exceptionally gifted individuals may rival their fathers, husbands, and brothers in music, the fine arts, or literature; and I know no one who would seek to discourage them. If some of them, and if even a larger proportion of unmarried women, chose to struggle for success in one or more of the learned professions, or in political life, while I for one should not be at all disposed to oppose them, I cannot regard the attainment of their object in large numbers as likely; or, if secured, without grave apprehension of serious evils. The training of the young, and education, specially in its early stages, always has been in the hands of women, and is better left there. If they do this work well, I can hardly imagine a higher or wider sphere of usefulness. As to the women of the middle classes, if we were to see them in this country doing, as many of them do in France, the work of the men, it might not do any harm to the women, but it would probably lead to the multiplication of a class of idle, intemperate, dissolute men. I still hope that, in our own land, man will ever work for woman, and woman ever be the solace and comfort of man, his good spirit, his better self,—*"mein guter Geist, mein besseres Ich."*

Again, we have heard of late much about over-pressure from work in schools. This is one of the novelties of our time. No doubt it exists, and I think that it may in part be traced to some of our sanitary success. We have reduced the mortality of early infancy. Many children who would formerly



have died off hand are now saved, and find their way into the schools. They are the survivals of the least fitted. They live, but they are not strong; not so strong as the average. They have to submit to the same routine, and to be forced up, if possible, to the same standard as the rest. But the effort is too much for them. Their frames are not hardy enough to resist the mental strain. They show all sorts of nerve symptoms, disappoint the teachers, and are the types brought forward as victims of the system. The vice of the system is that it is indiscriminate. There is no revision of the recruits, and the tasks are not apportioned to the feeble powers of sanitary survivors. This is an evil which will remedy itself in time by the growing up of a larger proportion of strong children, and the present difficulty may be got over by a little patience and moderation—a little more regard to sanitary logic. The children must have training before education, and must be put upon something even less than a half-time system.

2. Of the many things which affect our comfort and well-being, some are national, some local, some residential. One of the most potent means of influencing the sanitary condition of a country is the judicious regulation of its forests. In Great Britain the Government all but ignores the subject of Forestry. There is no school for teaching the science. Every proprietor is obliged to shift for himself, or to seek foreign help. And yet by looking at the state of things in Upper India, Palestine, and Russia, we may see what mismanagement leads to. Almost everywhere, man's ignorance and recklessness has worked evil by destruction of the forests. He has deteriorated the condition of the climate, taken away the productiveness of the soil, brought on famine and pestilence. We are not suffering to this extent. But negligence and mischief are inseparable, and to urge measures for the preservation of any climatic advantages we may still have, and the restoration of those we have lost, is assuredly work pertaining to a Sanitary Institute. My friend, Dr. Lyons, when in the House of Commons, did good service in pressing the importance of tree-planting, especially in Ireland, upon the attention of the Government. Unfortunately, he is no longer a Member of Parliament; but he still continues his efforts to prove that by well-directed management the whole of the timber and forest products now obtained from abroad, at an annual cost of some 32 millions sterling, might in time be furnished by our own land and labour, and that this economy would be attended by no less desirable changes in some of our climatic conditions.

Passing from national forestry to public gardening, I should like to say a good deal about the planting of trees in our towns,



the improvements in street architecture, and the formation and better arrangements of open-air spaces for exercise and enjoyment; but this part of the subject will be treated by Lord Brabazon in one of the sections, and is certain to lead to an interesting discussion. If I were to enter upon the wide field of the residential influences which influence our health and comfort I should detain you till midnight. And I must pass on, although the ventilation of our houses, school-rooms, and places for public meetings and amusements is a very tempting theme. But this also will lead, I trust, to discussion before the Congress closes.

3. In preventive medicine, the great event of the year has been the publication of Pasteur's views on hydrophobia, and his treatment of it by inoculation. I must not anticipate the reports of Commissions still sitting; but, in connection with what I have previously said, it is worth bearing in mind that, astonishing as Pasteur's own personal work has been, he has all the way through been adequately seconded. He has found means and material forthcoming, suitable accommodation has been provided for his investigations, he has been buoyed up by judicious encouragement, and he has never been obstructed by legislative impediments. He has been a benefactor to his country and to the world in many ways, and his services have met with a just recognition. But we must not be too sanguine, form unreasonable expectations, and jump to irrational conclusions. As he himself wisely says, in speaking of his attempts to neutralise the poison of hydrophobia, we must wait and see the results of what has been done before we can test the value of the practice. I accept the principle upon which he acts, and believe that those who are following his lead may outrival him in the good they confer upon mankind. We have made a great step in advance, and I can see that, before long, time will reveal to us in unexpected ways the importance of what has already been done. Unanimity of opinion upon questions still in the hands of experimenters need not be looked for, but we must all admit that in the cosmopolitan movement for the erection of Pasteur's hospital and laboratories we have another proof of what I have before insisted upon, that help is sure to be given upon the evidence of good work to be done.

Not content with endeavouring to prevent the spread of infective and contagious diseases, some of my friends think we should aim at their complete extinction. And if due and complete notification of every case of such disease could be ensured, and its specific germs limited in action to any particular locality, and the sick were properly isolated—in some cases subjected to specific treatment, or to inoculation—and all germs and germ-



carrying material within reach were destroyed by fire—then, so long as all these precautions were observed in any district, its safety might almost be guaranteed. But until the time arrives when there will be a universal attempt to stamp out specific diseases, infective material will be always hovering somewhere around us and making incessant protection necessary.

4. Yet, even if we were to realise the most enthusiastic visions of one of my most imaginative predecessors, and could cycle through the greater part of our century of life soundly and pleasantly, accidents must overtake some of us, and decay and infirmity must come sooner or later. This is a theme which gives play enough for intelligent thought. The rich when sick can afford the luxury of skilled attendance, and can hold out inducements enough for men of capacity to devote themselves to the study of medicine and surgery. But what are the poor to do? They can never alone, or without some aid or combination, afford adequate remuneration. Medical relief, as in legal phraseology it is called, is the first step to pauperism. Self-help in this matter is one of the first steps to independence. Provident dispensaries, giving members the right to attendance from medical men of their own choice at their own homes—the opening up of easy access, by small money payments, to the coveted advice of hospital staffs, and the foundation of clubs and cottage hospitals on sound principles, are among the best means of meeting the requirements of the sick poor. Our great establishments will always be needed for accidents and severe diseases which there is no possibility of treating successfully in cramped and ill-supplied homes. But hospitals do not necessarily pauperise. The very poor can well accept the care in them as a gracious gift, while those who have something to spare always can, and sometimes do, make a thank-offering. But on this subject you will have the advantage of hearing more in one of the sections from Mr. Bousfield and others who have studied it with care, and to them I may confidently leave the task of suggestion and discussion. Only on behalf of those who have had disease, who have been rescued from its immediate dangers, and are in a state of convalescence, with appetite, strength, spirits coming back slowly, and creating a craving for fresh air, and a longing for the few idle days so necessary to perfect recovery, I wish to impress upon all who hear me the importance of convalescent homes. They are springing up in numbers, but more are wanting to complete the work of our City hospitals. Many patients come to them from the country and return well to the country. But what is a poor town cripple now to do when he is relieved, and hospital atmosphere bars his recovery of health? And now that the urban population is yearly augmenting in such a rapid



manner, this necessity for providing for country convalescence is more and more urgent. The philanthropic sanitarian has something more to do than to fit up wards for the sick man to lie down in; he must see that in due time he may get the strength to "take up his bed and walk." If we cannot do miracles we may complete our charity.

5. Even the best regulated communities are encumbered with things which they must get rid of—human refuse, human remains. The one can be dealt with as best suits public convenience, but the other must be treated with reverence as well as security. In our "Transactions" already published, and in the forthcoming papers and discussions, you will find as much as can be told of what has been done through our instrumentality, and of the happy results that have followed. And if I may judge from the titles of promised papers, with illustrious names appended to them, upon the various aspects of sewerage, draining, the supply of water, ventilation, the purification of town atmosphere, lighting by electricity, and the extended application of gas to domestic purposes, this Congress will rival any others in the importance of the subjects brought forward. As regards the question of the disposal of the dead, I may refer you to a lecture of mine, which has been placed in your hands, with remarks upon it by Sir Lyon Playfair, Dr. Cameron, Sir Joseph Fayrer, and Mr. Seymour Haden, with two of the last letters written by the best of the Shaftesburys. Public opinion has been veering round since the publication of the Charge of Sir James Stephen. A custom known to be not illegal will be adopted by many who have hitherto been deterred by the fear of illegality; and the Society which alone in England gives facility for it, is ready to perfect its accommodation, or to give place to any administrative body upon a wider basis.

When we come to speak of the question of Legislation we, as Sanitarians, find ourselves in the same plight as the rest of the world loaded with good intentions. The waste of time and energy in Parliament in party struggles has banished all possible home legislation. We must bide our time, assured that, when this crisis of angry discussion of political complications has passed, the turn will come for practical measures. We shall then settle down to a calm consideration of what is really wanted, shall have our chance of being heard, and probably get a good deal of what we ask for. Our demands will appear so reasonable, our work so useful, and our plans so feasible, that no Committee will have the heart to suppress them, no Parliament the churlishness to refuse them. Only let us be prepared for the occasion, have our subjects chosen, our evidence forthcoming,



our arguments marshalled, and our advocates ready. We shall have ourselves to blame if we do not make sanitary legislation the popular legislation of some sessions near at hand.

In his address to the last annual meeting of the Institute Captain Galton remarked that, "if legislation is not to be ridiculous, it must be accompanied by increased knowledge in sanitary matters on the part both of the persons charged with administering the Sanitary Acts as well as of the public themselves." This is the key to the whole subject of sanitary legislation. The various classes of persons affected by sanitary measures, or concerned in carrying them out, show different degrees of sanitary knowledge, from the zero of ignorance on the part of the public, the confusion of local boards, the self-acquired information of district surveyors and inspectors of nuisances, the results, whatever they may be, of a course of hygienic medicine among the medical inspectors, up to the accumulated science of the Institute and its allies, and the acquired experience of the Local Government Board. The one fact that stands out clear above all others is that there is no definite channel by which these stores can be disseminated and employed for instruction. The course of lecture given by the professors at the London Colleges and at Netley are only intended for the use of medical students. There is no available public means of instruction in matters relating to health for the large body of surveyors, sanitary inspectors, and others whose actual duties are connected with public health; and nowhere at the present time is any systematic instruction given in practical hygiene to the general public. In the Report of our Council for this year it is stated that "the number of candidates for the examinations still continues to show a very rapid increase;" but it was only this year that, for the first time, a special course of lectures was arranged by the Parkes Museum to suit the requirements of persons preparing for the examinations of the Institute and other bodies which grant Certificates. These lectures were given by well-known authorities, and no fewer than sixty-three candidates entered for the course. This alone shows how fully justified Captain Galton was in making this further observation; that if the Sanitary Institute is fulfil its functions of diffusing knowledge in relation to sanitary science, "it must not be content with holding periodical examinations; it must develope its educational character still further, and it must afford opportunities for students to qualify themselves for these examinations by providing lectures on practical sanitation, and by furnishing laboratories for research in sanitary matters." As regards the public, it will no longer do to trust to the voluntary efforts of



the National Health Society, zealous and worthy of all praise as they have been. Such work may be suspended at any moment; and to be certain and effectual must be undertaken by some public body in an orderly and persistent manner. The ear of the public can be easily reached by suitable addresses and house-to-house visitation; their curiosity excited and their minds enlightened by the objects exposed for examination and explanation in museums. The Parkes Collection will inevitably grow into great importance, and arrangements can be made to secure its utility. But though teaching power can never be wanting among our members, the puzzling problem is how to bring it to bear directly upon the masses. This is a point upon which I confess myself unable to give a prompt opinion. As one for solution by our collective wisdom it stands second to none. Yet when we have instructed the public and embodied our contingent of qualified agency, how are we to make sure that the agents shall act efficiently upon the public? It can never be done without elaborate organisation; and no organised body can act without full legislative authority, and then only under a responsible chief. If it be expedient to have a military medical staff, and a naval medical staff, with their grades of officers and all-powerful directors-general, for the comparatively small bodies of the combatants, why should there not be for the much more numerous civil subjects a civil medical service, equally authorised and as honourably appointed? Such a service would form an important department of a Ministry of Health.

I have taken up a great deal of your time, and I must not presume much longer on your kind indulgence. But there is one matter which I must speak of before concluding, and that is the importance of our having the unsectarian assistance of all religious teachers. Sitting as we do here under the shadow of the hallowed Minster which is the crowning and significant glory of the ancient city of York, one cannot but recall to mind how for successive ages its ministers have been the benefactors of all who came within the sphere of their action. In times of ignorance, they spread light around them. In times of distress, they gave succour to the needy and shelter to the homeless. In times of sickness and pestilence, they were ever ready, at their own risk and peril, to visit either castle or cottage, with consolation for the troubled mind and remedies for the tortured body. And now, in these later days, they, and others allied with them in the same holy work, come amongst us laymen, trained up by them in the spirit of Christian charity, to second our attempts to work the good of the people, to instruct themselves in the principles of our science, and to add the benefit of their wisdom



and experience to our efforts, with as much zeal and devotion as were ever displayed by any of the bygone generations of their revered predecessors.

With such objects in view, actuated by the same spirit of good-will to mankind, and impelled forward by an equal energy, we may promise ourselves the attainment in due time of our desired end—that of contributing to the real and stable greatness of our country, by giving to it a healthy and long-lived population; for we may rest assured that, in the words of Froude, “A sound nation is a nation that is composed of sound human beings, healthy in body, strong of limb, true in word or deed—brave, sober, temperate, chaste—to whom morals are of more importance than wealth or knowledge—where duty is first, and the rights of man are second—where, in short, men grow up and live and work, having in them what our ancestors called ‘the fear of God!’”

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At the conclusion of the President's address, which was delivered in the Saloon of the Fine Art and Industrial Buildings Institutions,

The Very Rev. the DEAN OF YORK proposed a vote of thanks to the President for his address, and said that to endeavour to criticise what Sir Spencer Wells had said would be an impertinence, and to endeavour to supplement it would be ridiculous. The Very Rev. Dean could only, therefore, ask them to join with him in thanking the President for the very able and exhaustive address which he had given them that night, and the best evidence of their thanks would be to pledge themselves to read very carefully the address they had listened to, which it was impossible to grasp at one hearing, and endeavour as far as they could give it practical effect. What the President no doubt wished was, not that they should merely pass a formal approval of thanks for his address, and not only that it should interest or instruct them, but that it should be productive of some definite action in the future. The President had mentioned the two channels in which that action was to be sprung, the legal and the personal. As regarded the legal channel, no doubt it was their duty to make an effort to get beneficent laws passed as speedily as possible; but the prospect of legislation was not very encouraging. Legislation itself generally did not seem to make very rapid strides in the House of Commons, and the Dean did not see himself that there was any prospect of the way being sufficiently clear to enable the carrying out of beneficent legislation which would accomplish some good to be brought to the front. As Sir Spencer Wells said, if they thought it the right thing to do, they must agitate, and never be content until the measure they desired was accomplished. It was an old saying, “while the grass is growing the steed is starving,” and if their only hope of improving health was by legislation, he thought there would be a considerable increase in the bills of mortality before that came to pass. He did



not wish to speak disrespectfully of the power of the law, but he always felt that somehow or other things in England on the whole were carried out much more effectually eventually, and much more speedily, apart from the law. Many things he had seen in his day which seemed to almost defy the law had been overcome by the power of influence. There was in the English character a wonderful quality of sound common sense, though it might be a little difficult to arouse, and though there might be reluctance on the part of many to give up their old stereotyped prejudice, and adopt what were called new fangled ideas, yet sooner or later the good common sense of the English people, if they were convinced a thing was right and rational would accomplish great things without the aid of legislation at all. He illustrated his meaning by reference to the discontinuance of duelling in England, and to other social and moral reforms. Years ago it was thought that drunkenness could only be restrained by legal enactments, but the Temperance movement, which had made wonderful progress, had been carried on much better than would have been the case under legal enactments, and more happily apart from legal proceedings. While they did all they could to promote legislation, let them do all they could by their own influence and attention, and by their own efforts, to carry out reforms amongst themselves. There was, he thought, a certain amount of laziness in asking legislation to do everything for them, and he believed that if people would only study such matters as sanitary laws and regulations for themselves, and carry them into practice, a greater advantage would be obtained than by waiting for the work to be done by legislation. In conclusion, he asked them again to join him in heartily thanking Sir Spencer Wells for his admirable paper.

The LORD MAYOR OF YORK, in seconding the proposition, said the President had presented them with a remarkable array of facts, which it would be impossible for the most perfect listener to remember, however they might be impressed with that painstaking address. The subjects referred to would dwell upon their minds, and increase the interest that attached to the Sanitary Congress. His lordship acknowledged the beneficent work which had been done by the Sanitary Institute of Great Britain, and said it was gratifying that eminent scientific men should visit the towns of the Kingdom, and, by their influence, secure the recognition of the means they suggested for the promotion of the national health.

The proposition was carried with acclamation.

SIR SPENCER WELLS, Bart., the President of the Congress, in reply, said a vote of thanks carried in such a meeting as that was quite enough to repay him for any little trouble taken in preparing his address; and still more would he be repaid if anything he had said made them more in earnest in helping to promote the health of the people.







