

had been properly prepared, or properly masticated, or the teeth properly preserved, or if the stomach had not been overtaxed with excess of rich food.

The gout or dipsomania might certainly have been prevented by temperate habits.

The broken leg or sprained ankle would have been avoided if the reckless jump had not been taken, or if the bit of orange peel had not been cast carelessly on the pavement.

The eyesight saved, if prolonged strain and over-use had not been thoughtlessly indulged in.

Consumption never have come if foul, germ-laden air, or irritant dust, had not been recklessly inhaled.

The small-pox infallibly escaped if vaccination and revaccination had not been neglected.

Even the attack of scarlet fever or diphtheria might have been surely warded off, if ordinary care with regard to the spread of infection had been exercised.

The possession of the necessary knowledge on these points would not however wholly remedy the evil. It is clear that, in our present state of civilisation, men's necessities must often compel them to transgress the laws of health in the struggle for existence; or their inclinations lead them, in spite of their convictions, to sacrifice future good to present gratification.

Yet knowledge would do much, if not all; and the good would grow. Similarly, most diseases which depend upon faults of public hygiene—drainage, water supply, overcrowding—are obviously preventible likewise.

They are not prevented because the majority of people are either ignorant that such prevention is possible, or else if they have any knowledge at all about the matter, it is so vague and imperfect that it fails practically to influence their conduct. They do not believe in the efficiency of sanitary measures, and act upon that belief.

They do not know or appreciate the irresistible array of facts which demonstrates the intimate dependence of typhoid fever and diphtheria upon foul, germ-laden organic matter in air breathed or water swallowed; of typhus fever upon filth and overcrowding; the mode of transmission of contagious diseases; the inevitable fatality of continued over-indulgence in alcoholic stimulants. And so, conversely, they do not understand, or believe, how pure air and water, cleanliness and abundant living space, vaccination and the isolation of infectious cases, and temperate habits, secure immunity from these diseases.

The prime source of mischief is, indeed, ignorance. This is being gradually cleared away. The knowledge of sanitary truths is steadily gaining ground, and our sanitary condition has enormously

improved since the good old times, when the black death, and the plague, and the jail fever, and ague, and scurvy, and small-pox decimated the population to such an extent that, for two hundred and seven years (from 1593 to 1800) the deaths in London, and probably in dense large towns, invariably exceeded the births. Taking the last eighteenth century even, the excess of deaths over births in London was six thousand a year—six hundred thousand for the one hundred years!

The progress of knowledge of the laws of health was terribly hampered, until comparatively recent times, by the superstition and credulity which prevailed almost universally. The most absurd and extraordinary delusions held sway as to the causation and origin of disease; the credulity of even the more educated classes was unbounded. So long, for example, as all the evils which befel mankind from want or exposure or filth, or unhealthy habits of life, were unhesitatingly believed to be due to supernatural causes, the possibility of preventing or controlling these evils by good food and pure air, and pure water and temperate habits, never suggested itself. Until established superstitions and delusions were swept away it was impossible for a rational system of hygiene to come into existence.

In the early ages of mankind, when knowledge was small and confined to the learned few, the natural curiosity of the human mind as to the origin of diseases had to be satisfied with fanciful and arbitrary guesses. This mystery of the cause of disease, like all other mysteries of nature, was solved by the supposition of innumerable supernatural beings or influences, according to whose caprice men were benefited or injured, punished or rewarded. Neither the learned few nor the ignorant masses could understand invariable laws.

If an eclipse took place a dragon was supposed to have swallowed up the sun.

If an earthquake occurred, some demon was presumed to be at work beneath the surface of the ground.

When a pestilence raged, the invisible arrows of an offended deity struck down the victims.

The plague was due to the deadly touch of a black spirit or a white spirit. If the former, the disease was inevitably fatal; if the latter, recovery was possible.

In the Middle Ages, if a man suffered from severe pain in the head or in the region of the heart, a witch was at work inflicting these tortures by sticking pins into a wax image made to represent the sufferer.

Other maladies were explained in similar fashion, and when this form of superstition was

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