

ling, but as soon as possible the child should be allowed longer intervals of rest. All eyes that have marked corneal involvement or prolapse belong to the surgeon, and their nursing requires a separate paper.

### Lecture given at the Sorbonne.

By DR. RIST.

(Translated from the French by Miss E. R. Wortabet.)

NOTE.—*La Soignante* gives the following extract from a lecture which Dr. Rist, Physician to the Laënnec Hospital, gave at the College of the Sorbonne, Paris. I have much pleasure in translating it, as it puts in the most clear, logical, and elegant language the fact, that as science advances, so medical men have had to be drawn from a higher intellectual and social stratum, and nurses their collaborators, equally so!—E. R. WORTABET.

We now know that illness and death are natural phenomena—neither more nor less than birth and health. We understand that human life is limited in time, and that it is a fact against which no fiction, no rebellion can prevail. We perceive that it means losing it, creatures of one day that we are, to try to prolong it into eternity. And the scientific mind, which teaches us to accept facts as natural phenomena, also enables us to accept, with calm and without vain and proud struggles, sickness and death as facts.

We can suppress them, we cannot escape them definitely, any more than we can prevent apple trees from bearing apples. But we can prevent apple trees from producing bad apples. We are powerless in preventing rivers from flowing, but it is in our power to keep them in their beds, to make them navigable, and, if they are subject to periodical floods, to utilise the inundations into fertilisers instead of devastators.

Thus it is not beyond our power to prevent death coming before its time, through our ignorance or neglect. If the death of man comes in ripe age, having gone through all the psychological stages of the natural phenomena of human life, this death, however painful it may be, is caused by nothing which shocks our intelligence; but it is unjust, it is absurd, it is revolting to a clear conscience, that children should die in early infancy, because they have been badly nourished and clothed, brought up in ignorance of common sense, that young men should succumb to typhoid fever, because they drank contaminated water, or to diphtheria because an epidemic was not encircled,

because they had been deprived of skilled medical attendance, and because they were not injected with that serum which would have saved their lives.

To-day we can look death in the face, and quietly accept the fact that our life must have its end; with our optimistic instinct, only safeguard of our race during its slow ascent towards light, many of us are able to substitute a serene consciousness of the inevitable. But in exchange for this long effort, we possess, so to speak, a right, a right to the whole length of the life, which we have learnt to content ourselves with. To die, so be it, but not before we have lived, but not before we have gone through our course. To die, so be it, but because we have accomplished our course to the end, and not because a microbe, or a poison, had stupidly killed us before our time. This moderate length of life which our physical constitution has assigned us, we wish it well managed, it only seems to us just that it should be so, and every life that has been spoiled, deprived of beauty, shortened by avoidable suffering, shocks us as an iniquity.

This iniquity is no longer, as in days gone by, imputed to invisible and inaccessible powers, but to the human community. The right to health, which every one of us brings in coming into the world, must be exacted from the community. And this right which develops day by day, and of which we are now conscious, is, like everything else we call a right, another aspect of duty, the duty to health which imposes itself on the individual as a member of a social body.

It is this modern scientific mind which alone has been able to create in us the sense of this right, and of this duty, a thought which is still quite recent which is understood by a small number only, but which rises, develops, and strengthens every day. For ancient medicine, which was nothing but an empirical trade, we have now a substitute in scientific medicine, which becomes a necessary social function. In days gone by, illness was something mysterious and fatal, against which they fought as a lottery, by fortune telling without any method or vision. To-day diseases are natural phenomena which are analysed, submitted to scientific investigation, and the causes ascertained. It is a work only begun, but which during the past century has made gigantic strides. Already we know that many ailments, previously the most terrible and most fatal, are avoidable evils, and that with judicious and concentrated organisation, we can prevent their reaching us. There are others, alas! against which we are still powerless. But

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