

SCIENCE:

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Attention is called to the "Wants" column. All are invited to use it in soliciting information or seeking new positions. The "Exchange" column is likewise open.

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AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION.

THE seventeenth annual convention of the American Public Health Association was opened Tuesday in the Brooklyn Institute. About two hundred members from all parts of this country and Canada were present.

The first paper was upon "The Overshading of Our Homes," by Dr. William Thornton Parker of Newport, R.I. It was read by Dr. C. A. Lindsley of New Haven. In the paper the writer said in part, "Overshading is a serious fault, and directly lessens the value of real estate, and noticeably increases disease and shortens life. Houses overshadowed are not healthful, no matter how commodious or well built they may be. This condition of overshadowing is very noticeable in our New England and Middle States towns. The white faces and sickly appearance of so many of our people are largely attributable to this cause, and suggest that medical men should call attention to the growing evil. Where houses are overshadowed, the nervous system also suffers, as well as the general bodily health." The discussion brought out clearly that this is a subject on which doctors disagree.

Dr. Lindsley said that it was his belief that the great number of trees in New Haven was unquestionably the cause of much malaria and other disease in that city. Dr. Henry P. Walcott of Massachusetts remarked that he had lived in a town as much shaded as New Haven, and found no harm from the great number of trees, but a direct benefit. Dr. George M. Sternberg, U.S.A., believed that many malarious places were redeemed by the planting of trees. Dr. Gilhon of Washington mentioned the fact that the Roman Campagna had been freed from malaria to a great degree

by the planting of eucalyptus trees. The swamps in California were dried in the same way.

The second paper, upon "Clothing in its Relation to Hygiene," was by Dr. James F. Hibberd of Richmond, Ind. His conclusions are that many persons dress too warmly, and thus induce disease. Most persons only regard the amount of clothing to be worn so that it should protect sufficiently against cold, and wholly disregard the effect of over-heating and thus disarranging the functions of the skin.

Dr. Hibberd maintained that an insufficiently clothed person was not the one who caught cold, but it was the overclad one who was most subject to it.

He summed up as follows: "It seems time that the relation of clothing to the health of the people of temperate climates engaged in civil industries should be reviewed, and the points for investigation may be summarized thus: viz., 1. The popular and professional estimate of the hygiene of the skin is much below its real importance; 2. The physiology of the skin cannot be largely interfered with without endangering the general health; 3. One of the influential factors in the sound health of man is to establish and maintain in his organization a resisting power to the causes of disease; 4. The tendency is to overdress, enervating the skin, and curtailing its power, and thereby the power of the whole system, to resist the causes of disease; 5. A proper exposure of the surface of the body to environing low temperature is a valuable general tonic; 6. Ventilation of the skin is indispensable to good health; 7. Habit may enable one to bear wide differences in clothing under similar surroundings without detriment, and this should impress the necessity of cultivating correct habits of dress.

A paper on "Causes and Prevention of Infant Mortality" was presented by Dr. Jerome Walker of Brooklyn. Dr. Walker finds from statistics that the common belief was not sustained that infant mortality in this country had decreased of late years. The hope of the future lies in a radical change, so that mere political doctors may not control the health boards, and in the sanitary education of the masses. The speaker said, "We may conclude from what is known of institutions for children, (1) that a large proportion of the deaths in them are preventable; (2) that the younger the children and the larger the number, the greater the mortality; (3) that the mortality can be lessened, but the decrease costs money, time, patience, and energy; and to obtain the best results the attending and resident physicians should be reliable, should be given control over all medical and sanitary matters, and should be held responsible for the same."

In the next paper, on "The Relations of the Dwellings of the Poor to Infant Mortality," by Alfred F. White, C.E., of Brooklyn, were quoted statistics to show that such institutions as the Peabody Association of London were needed here. Through the reforms thus instituted in tenement-house construction, the infant mortality of London had been reduced to 15 per cent of all deaths, while in this city it was 26 per cent.

Dr. George Homan of St. Louis, secretary of the Missouri State Board of Health, read a paper advocating the employment of better men as local health-officers at higher pay.

In the evening the delegates and their friends went to the Academy of Music. Dr. J. H. Raymond opened the exercises with a short address of welcome. Mayor Chapin welcomed the delegates on behalf of the city, and Dr. Hutchins performed a similar office for the medical profession. Then came the address of President Johnson. His purpose, he said, was to talk to the people, not to scientists. He said, —

"A death from typhoid-fever now means not so much a dispensation of Providence as it means foul water, foul food, or foul air. A city is decimated by a pestilence, and it is found that its foundations are honeycombed with cesspools, and its drinking-water is diluted sewage. The judgments of God, in the light of these revelations, become no more mysterious than the pains of the child that laughingly thrusts its tiny finger into the brilliant flame only to feel the terrible infliction that follows. There has come to be an enthusiasm in the medical profession on this subject which has made itself felt in various ways. This zeal has communicated itself to the public. An intelligent foundation has been laid for sanitary reforms.