

SCIENCE

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EPIDEMIOLOGY AND RECENT EPIDEMICS¹

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It has been the custom, I am informed, at these meetings to spend little time and few words on mere felicitations, but to proceed as promptly as may be to the business of the congress. However, you will, I know, indulge me long enough to enable me to express to you in some degree the sense of honor and responsibility which I feel on this occasion.

Since the last congress, which was held in 1916, in the midst of the racking uncertainties of the great war, notable events and serious calamities have befallen the world and arrested the attention of all thoughtful men. A bitter and passionate military contest has been brought to a hopeful conclusion; but because of the unparalleled cost of the struggle, in lives and in treasure, deep unrest, revolution even, starvation and diseases are prevailing over a large part of Europe, while also within the three-year period elapsed between the last congress and the present one three destructive epidemics of disease have ravaged the United States and the world.

Hence it has seemed fitting to me that on this occasion and before this representative body of medical men we should pause for a brief period in order to review, as it were, our knowledge of epidemics and at the same time of the practical hygienic measures, based on this knowledge, which we already put or in ordinary course of events may reasonably hope to put into motion against the spread of these epidemics, so that we may form a judgment of the efficacy of such measures and arrive possibly at new points of view from which to launch a more decisive attack. Moreover, it

¹ President's address, X. Congress of American Physicians and Surgeons, held at Atlantic City, N. J., June 16 and 17, 1918. This address appears in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.