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Editorial

HALIFAX is currently in the midst of epidemics which include measles, scarlet fever, cerebro-spinal fever, and diphtheria. Regarding the first three we have little to say, but diphtheria is a disease which is easily preventable; why should there be an epidemic? If rumour be true, the present permanent population of this city is almost double that of a few years ago; the transient population is of tremendous proportions, and the latter fact is undoubtedly of importance in the production of infectious diseases, especially of cerebro-spinal fever. But there are other factors of equal, or greater importance which must be borne in mind, and because of these it seems appropriate at this time to bring to the attention, especially of the students, the relation between the physician, surgeon, or general practitioner, and the ever-important question of Public Health or Preventive Medicine. It is not our purpose to criticize the civic health authorities, as some see fit to do; without question they are doing a job which is out of all proportion to their personnel; nor do we wish to lay the blame at the feet of the medical men, because without the cooperation of their patients, and the public in general, their task is difficult indeed. We propose to attempt to point out to the medical student where his duty lies, once he is in practice, in the prevention of such epidemics, and in the maintenance of the health of the public. Very few of us will undertake Preventive Medicine as a specialty, but this does not mean that we should lose sight of Public Health altogether. Perhaps the majority will be engaged in general practice, and as such will form the first line of contact

with the general population, and obviously a medical man in this position is the prime factor in the prevention, or the recognition, when necessary, of infectious diseases. What, then, should be the essential factors governing our attitude towards the prevention of these diseases?

First, we require knowledge regarding what diseases are preventable, and the rationale of treatment towards this end; we must know how, and when to immunize, and we must have the courage of our convictions in enforcing our knowledge, in advising patients as to what should be done, and in convincing them of the value of such procedures.

Also, in our storehouse of medical skill, must lie the power of correct and early diagnosis of such conditions. Coupled with this we must exercise the principles of isolation and treatment to the best of our ability to prevent spread and contamination of large sections of the population.

In brief, it is our opinion that it is the duty of every medical man who carries on any sort of medical practice involving private or public patients to realize at all times the necessity and the value of prevention of those diseases which are preventable, and to exercise all his powers, wherever possible, to ensure public health. If every graduate were to leave this school with these points in mind, and were to enforce them to the best of his ability, we feel sure that such situations as the present one in Halifax would indeed be few and far between.

— “ doctors are sometimes called silly because they spend their lives inventing ways of controlling disease, thereby lessening their business. That is a stupid view. By preventing the epidemics we keep the kids alive until they reach old age, opulence, and achieve rheumatism and high blood pressure. One rheumatic patient will produce more revenue than a whole epidemic of measles. I can prove it by my books.”

ARTHUR E. HERTZLER, M.D.

“Once established in practice, the doctor is always in the public eye. Certain obligations he cannot escape. Where he lives, how he lives, must conform to accustomed ideas of the profession. His occupation is a serious one, which must in some degree be reflected in his manner, and even in his dress. The motor car has done much to alter the old rigid views in this respect, but there still remains the essential need of a residence and other signs of established prosperity that will tax his financial resources at the outset to a greater extent than in most other walks of life.”—*E. Kaye LeFleming.*