

REVIEW OF REVIEWS

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SUES CITY FOR LETTING HIM CONTRACT TYPHOID FEVER

The following interesting item is given by *Health News*, the weekly bulletin of the New York State Department of Health:

A suit brought by John Weisner against the city of Albany in behalf of one of his sons who is said to have contracted typhoid fever from drinking polluted city water in the spring of 1924, and to have suffered permanent injury to his health thereby, was decided in favor of the plaintiff in the Supreme Court at Albany on October 26 by a jury which awarded damages in the sum of \$3,000, \$2,000 of which is given to the son and \$1,000 to the father. This was a second trial of the action, the first, brought last spring, having resulted in a disagreement. Counsel for the city announced that an appeal would probably be taken, to the Court of Appeals if necessary.

Counsel for the plaintiff based the case on the theory that the city contracts with each citizen to furnish water free from pollution, and that the city was negligent in failing to give timely and sufficient warning to the people that such pollution existed.

Of approximately 200 cases of typhoid fever which occurred at about the same time, 13 filed notice of suit within the required period and now have right of action.

ANNUAL PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

The importance of an annual physical examination is emphasized by Dr. Cumming of the U. S. Public Health Service, in the following paragraphs:

"The value of a periodic physical examination, cannot be overestimated. Every business man appreciates the importance of a periodic inventory. It is a good business principle to make an inventory at regular intervals in order to find out the true state of stock, yet singularly enough few people carry the stock-taking idea over into the equally important field of personal health.

"Many diseases begin slowly or insidiously and may not produce any disabling symptoms until the condition is considerably advanced. Tuberculosis, cancer, Bright's disease, diabetes, hardening of the arteries, and certain forms of heart disease are examples of diseases that may begin unnoticed. To the physician, trained to note the slightest symptom of disorder, the beginning of these illnesses is at once apparent. A careful physical examination made periodically would detect such diseases early and allow of the prompt institution of proper treatment.

"Objection to periodic physical examinations is sometimes made on the ground

that such examinations cause much unnecessary worry, especially if some disease is detected. If a diseased condition is present, the person affected should know about it in order that corrective steps may be taken promptly. If a person is in excellent health, he has nothing to fear from a physical examination, but such an examination will add to his peace of mind and mental security. Such periodic examinations should begin in early life, certainly during the pre-school age, and be continued into old age. If this practice was begun then, there would be found many defects of vision, and hearing and such conditions as enlarged tonsils, nasal obstructions, adenoids, flat feet, sequelæ of diseases of childhood, and similar conditions, which could be corrected and thus the handicap of such children could be avoided.

“Periodic physical examinations are valuable not only for the early detection of diseases but also serve as a guide in the selection of suitable employment for those with known defects.

“Business should be applied to the care of the human body, and a periodic inventory taken by a competent physician.”

DIPHTHERIA IMMUNIZATION

Resolution on Diphtheria Immunization Presented at the American Health Congress Which Met at Atlantic City on May 21

WHEREAS, Ten thousand lives are sacrificed needlessly from diphtheria in the United States each year, 90 per cent of which deaths occur in children under five years of age, and

WHEREAS, Science has now given to us a means whereby complete protection against this disease may be secured by the administration of toxin-antitoxin, with the result that the vast majority of people so immunized would never contract diphtheria, even though exposed to it, and

WHEREAS, Ten years of experience have proven the entire practicability of eliminating diphtheria from a community by widespread immunization of school children, and more particularly of children from one to five years of age; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the health workers of the nation, assembled in the American Health Congress, with the best interest of the children of America at heart, strongly urge upon the attention of the people of the United States the opportunity thus afforded them of banishing diphtheria from the United States.

—Quoted by *Public Health News*, of New Jersey.

INSANITY

Some Misconceptions That Still Linger—

1. That insanity comes suddenly.

2. That once insane always insane.
3. That insanity is a disgrace.
4. That insanity is an unfortunate visitation to be regarded with resignation and fatalism.
5. That mental disease is incurable.
6. That asylums for the insane are dreadful places and that admission to them rings down the curtain on the lives of the victims.
7. That emotional shock, the loss of dear ones, disappointment in love, economic loss, and other human misfortunes cause insanity.
8. That insanity is a specific disease entity.
9. That nobody can guard against mental disease.
10. That a person is either sane or insane.
11. That "nervous breakdown" is a disease of the nerves.

WHAT SCIENCE IS TEACHING TODAY

1. That insanity develops gradually over shorter or longer periods of time.
2. That many of the insane are restored to health after a period of hospital treatment.
3. That insanity is a condition no more to be ashamed of than pneumonia or a broken limb.
4. That insanity is a mental disease and should receive medical attention, just as tuberculosis, cancer or other physical conditions.
5. That many persons with mental disease are being cured today and restored to health and normality.
6. That our asylums are being turned into hospitals in which the insane receive medical care and treatment, and from which between 25 and 40 per cent are discharged recovered or improved.
7. That personal misfortunes and tragedies are frequently the precipitating causes of insanity, but the accumulation of a variety of factors inherent in the progressive life experience of the individual is really responsible for unsettling mental balance and bringing on mental breakdowns.
8. That "insanity" is a convenient term used by the courts to denote irresponsibility in the eyes of the law, and that there are many different kinds of mental disorder just as there are many kinds of physical disorder.
9. That there are usually danger signals and symptoms of an approaching breakdown that can be recognized and medically dealt with.
10. That there are different degrees of mental health, just as there are varying degrees of physical health.

11. That "nervous breakdown" is in reality a mental condition in which there is seldom anything organically wrong with the nervous system.

—Quoted by *Public Health News* of New Jersey, from *The Mental Hygiene Bulletin*.

HOW TO PURCHASE HEALTH

The following instructive editorial is taken from *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

"The statement is frequently made that good health is a purchasable commodity. It has been shown repeatedly that the elimination of many of the preventable diseases that afflict mankind is largely a matter of the application of personal cleanliness, involving also the elimination of garbage, swamps, insects and similar material objects associated with the spread of disease. Various plans have been evolved for rating the work of the health departments of individual communities. These ratings give consideration to such functions of the health department as the keeping of vital statistics; the control of communicable diseases, including venereal diseases and tuberculosis; the attention given to prenatal care; infant and school hygiene; the control of milk, water and food supply, and of sewerage; the methods of the community laboratory for aiding in the diagnosis and prevention of disease, and, finally, the work done to educate the public in health affairs. In 1924 for example, the city of Knoxville was appraised according to these factors by Dr. W. S. Rankin, and received a score of 351 out of a possible 1,000 points. A second analysis, made by Dr. C. St. Clair Drake in 1926, showed a net gain of 259 points, or 73 per cent, during the two years. This rating was apparently achieved by increasing attention to the factors that have been mentioned, by close coöperation with the medical profession through an advisory board, in the selection of which the county medical society aided, and in the economical use of appropriations made for health work. The city of Knoxville is to be congratulated on its progress. It is only by scientific systems of measurement and appraisal that the actual extent of progress may be suitably ascertained."

