ADDRESS FROM THE PROVINCIAL BOARD OF HEALTH TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION.

BY CHARLES W. COVERTON, M. D., CHAIRMAN.

Mr. President: As a conjoint delegate with Dr. Bryce from the Provincial Board of Health of the Province of Ontario to the twelfth annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, and a delegate from the dominion government of Canada to the International Conference of State Boards of Health, postponed from August last, at Washington, to the present date in this city, it affords me very great pleasure to testify to the great interest that is increasingly attaching to all that is said and done at these reunions of members of our profession, as also of distinguished laymen, who take a warm interest in the advance of preventive medicine.

The industry and tenacity of purpose that this association and the numerous state boards of this vast country have for long years displayed in the prosecution of this branch of our science, affords abundant evidence that you have not considered it to be limited to the preservation of health and the diminution of disease, but that you have aimed at the amelioration and perfecting of bodily strength, vigor of constitution, and full development of all the powers of the system by early training, judicious education, and properly regulated bodily exercise. As an illustration of your acceptance of the French proverb, Prévenir vaut mieux que guérir, you have perseveringly insisted upon proper drainage of both country and city, on adequate and pure water-supply, efficient sewerage and disposal of sewage, proper ventilation of dwellings, removal of organic débris, hygienic regulation of workshops, factories, schools, hospitals, asylums, and penitentiaries. These and a great number of other important subjects have been for a great number of years your constant study; and of the success of your labors, in the circulation of a large amount of sanitary knowledge by health treatises, pamphlets, and admirable yearly reports from your numerous state boards, the control of epidemics, and the greatly diminished death-rate, afford convincing evidence.

I much question, sir, whether the magnitude of the work accomplished in this noble labor for the last thirty years by such untiring enthusiasts as Bowditch, Elisha Harris, Draper, Billings, Folsom, Cabell, yourself, and a host of other eminent men in the various states of the Union, many of whom are here assembled, is other than imperfectly known, and still less appreciated. The same remark may apply equally to distinguished workers in this cause in England and other European countries. Witness the comparatively slight recognition by the state of the invaluable
labors of Chadwick, Farre, Simon, Carpenter, Richardson, and others. Sir Spencer Wells, in an address delivered some years ago, remarked, "What indeed could be so disheartening to a learned profession as the fact, that while for the affair of Magdala Lord Napier was honored by a title and rewarded with a pension, the extended average duration of life of the whole population, and its actual increase due to sanitary and medical science, far exceeding in importance the annexation of a province or of a kingdom, has earned for Mr. Simon the barren right, shared by many less honorably known men, of putting the two letters, C. B. after his name; and William Farre still remains without any mark of national gratitude." The same want of adequate recognition of services rendered, I apprehend, sir, exists equally in your great republic. If, however, there exists reason for complaint of an imperfect state recognition of the important work of preventive medicine, the profession and general public appreciate fully the patient care, sedulous attention, and continued vigilance exercised over causes of disease by sanitarians.

The yearly meetings of this and other similar associations in the several states of your Union, and the international congresses of hygiene in Europe, assembling every two years for the purpose of conferring on all subjects connected with the science, and the great increase of late years of minute microscopic investigations into possible causes of disease, either from water, air, or food, all point to the untiring zeal of the devotees to this branch of medicine, and to the conclusion that they are far from entertaining the opinion that the end of human investigation into obscure diseases has been reached. May we not, on the contrary, indulge the hope that advanced pathological knowledge, continued attention to microscopical research, careful watching effects of rise and fall of ground-water, patient meteorological investigations, and a careful attention to the condition of immigrants on arrival at our seaports, may to a very great extent accomplish immunity from epidemic diseases? Dr. Lionel Beale has estimated, that for the price of each monster cannon, governments might secure the services of a skilled microscopist, and at the cost of each discharge might carry through an important investigation into the nature of disease.

The good effects of health associations, when worked as this national one has been, are generally known and acknowledged. They have not for their object simply the acquiring of knowledge, but the more useful one of communicating it in announcing discoveries, deducing general laws from numerous facts, correcting false theories, and rendering it acceptable and pleasing. Thus are brought into a common stock the gatherings of each, the sum total made larger, and a common interest imparted. The debates upon points of difficulty and on diverse theories will awaken a spirit of inquiry, quicken the mind, sharpen the wit, and soften asperities. What better system for the discussion of the various subjects connected with state medicine could be conceived than these congresses? From a hygienic point, as also from others, Canadians may learn much from their cousins on this side of the line. We acknowledge indebted-
ness to the yearly reports of your state boards, e.g., Massachusetts, New York, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, West Virginia, and others. Valuable assistance has been derived from them since the inauguration of our Ontario board. As the present chairman, I desire to offer my thanks, as also those of my colleagues, for the fraternal kindness we have invariably received at the hands of the officers and members of these boards; and to say further, that nothing would afford us greater pleasure, to express in deeds rather than in barren words our appreciation of these courtesies, than by your giving us the opportunity of entertaining you at the next annual meeting of this association in our city of Toronto. In this expression of our board I am authorized to say that the desire is reciprocated by our Minister of Health, the Hon. Mr. Ross, and I am well assured is equally reciprocated by the profession generally of our queen city.

In conclusion, Mr. President, allow me to express the sentiment,—

"May the American Public Health Association long continue its great work of sanitary reform, and ever be distinguished in the future as in the past by the ability and zeal so conspicuously displayed by its founders and present members." Floreat Hygiea. I believe the celebrated David Crockett prefaced to us the pertinent phrase "Go ahead," with "Be sure you are right." Sanitarians know that they are right, and will endeavor, in spite of all obstacles, persistently to go ahead.