

THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT ON MAN.

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(Abstract.)

The paper traced in broad lines the influence of latitude as seen in the frigid, torrid, and temperate zones. Factors that bear on the matter of health and ill-health were taken up in some detail for the temperate zone.

Local State conditions were then taken up from the standpoint of the biologist and evolutionist, beginning with the primitive inhabitants, the Indians; the absence of diseases on account of their environment and customs was commented on. The white settlers who came in belonged to a race where elimination through the action of disease had been going on actively for ages and among whom the more susceptible had been killed off and were still being killed off, but today largely dependent on modifiable disease-producing conditions.

Individuals or families or strains whose history goes back to European city life may show quite a different reaction to present day environment than does that of those whose ancestry goes back to country life with little elimination on account of diseases. The early Jews who arrived in this country were almost exclusively from the cities where the disease weeding out process had been most severe; the Jews coming in today are mainly from the country districts where the air conditions are good, and when these crowd into our dirty cities many fail. Asiatics, again, coming from the highly unsanitary cities are able to thrive in our own cities, because they are the survival of the fittest, fittest to live under unsanitary surroundings.

Among the descendants of the pre-revolutionary immigrants to this country we have to consider the ancestral urban or rural life, and similar life conditions since in this country, with its attendant elimination or non-elimination. A hardy stock transferred to an isolated environment, as to the southern mountains, is to a large extent exempted from exposure to diseases and practically all the offspring may reach the re-

productive stage; when removal to the crowded city takes place elimination through disease is apt to go on actively.

Reaction to environment varies greatly, from a feeling of health to illhealth and disease. Pain is to be regarded as a warning from nature and plays an important role in the process of adaptation to environment. Some strains or individuals are wholly unadapted to city life with its manifold disease-producing conditions. Many disease-producing conditions have been eliminated from city life today, others are more active than ever, notably the impure air factor.

A study of simple country conditions, of village conditions, of town and small city conditions may shed much light on the complex city life. Much of the illhealth and disease of the large city is preventable and the lives of many can be lengthened. The erection of more hospitals, as ordinarily conducted, is not a remedy for correcting the evils of city environment; the environmental influences are themselves to be largely altered. Much depends on education and there is urgent need for an institution that will take up the study of factors operative today.