Much has been written of late concerning the increased prevalence of pneumonia and the increasing ratio of deaths from this disease. We see this not only in the medical journals of the day but also see references to the fact in the lay press.

State medical societies and state boards of health have instituted inquiries into the causes of this condition of affairs, and commissions have been appointed by municipalities with the same object in view. At the present time a commission of the leading medical men of the country has been appointed by the City of New York, and it is intended that the investigation to be pursued by it shall include an inquiry as to the prevalence of this disease in all the large cities and hospitals in the country.

The fact that pneumonia is an infectious disease has long been known, but much remains to be learned of the laws that govern its incidence, and influence its prevalence in localities and in buildings.

This increased prevalence and mortality suggest a few reflections.

Ten years ago the total number of deaths in Milwaukee was 4,253 (1894), the total population being 245,000. In 1903 the total number of deaths was 4091, the population being 315,000. In 1894, 75 percent of the deaths (2,339) occurred in persons under 40 years of age. Hence it follows that in 1894 there were 1,182 deaths in persons over 40 years of age, whereas in 1903 there were 1,752 deaths in persons over 40 years of age.

It is a law of nature that all living things must die. Those individuals who do not die before they reach the age of 40 years must die afterwards. It is manifest that they will not die of the diseases of infancy and young childhood, but will and must die of those diseases specially prevalent after the period of middle life.

Among these diseases may be mentioned the following: Arteriosclerosis, myocardial affections, pneumonia, cancer and all diseases of the nervous system; and if we consult the current literature of the day we shall note that there is a great and rapidly growing increase in the prevalence of these diseases and the mortality therefrom [sic]. This may, a priori, be expected. It is merely inevitable. Six years has been added to the average age of man in the last decade—a truly marvelous fact—and much is expected in the future.

Old age is now being regarded by some as a disease, and men are already at work on the problem of its prevention.

If, however, we are to judge the future by the past, there will be a gradual lessening of the birth rate; there will a gradual lessening in mortality among infants and young children; a larger proportion of those born into the world will reach adult age; but there will continue to be an increase in the prevalence of, and mortality from, these diseases peculiar to advanced years.
The mission of the Wisconsin Medical Journal is to provide a vehicle for professional communication and continuing education of Wisconsin physicians.

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