In the statistics of diseases it has been for a long time recorded that maladies which are at one period scattered and occasional, at other times appear in accumulative form, and are epidemic, or inflicted "upon the general people." These two phases of sickness seem to have their origin in obscure and perhaps elementary causes, but the mitigation or aggravation of these unfavourable states of health seems to be very much within the influences of our own neglect on the one hand, and our own zeal, courage, and industry on the other. Medical professional literature distinguishes very clearly the sporadic or occasional occurrences of diseases from their more universal or epidemic accesses among us; and although these attacks have their individual states, and retain them in some seasons, yet at other times the minor visitations quickly pass into the more general outbreaks which are known as plagues or pestilences. Through these stages of aggravation some of our most familiar diseases are known to pass. Typhus fever, at times limited to occasional cases, is, as we all know, constantly assuming for awhile the epidemic aggravation; and at more distant cycles we have diseases which are usually sporadic taking on them the epidemic continuance and universality. It is scarcely necessary to mention the series of diseases respecting which this is most remarkable, but the best remembered are perhaps influenza, hooping-cough, and small-pox. Various animal families as well as mankind have been found subject to these two classes of maladies; living vegetables, too, and even dead organic substances, have their laws of destruction—the normal or usual, and the abnormal or epidemic. The dry-rot in timber, which occurred with great malignity in Cork some years ago, illustrates my last statement. This peculiar fungus extended its destructive vegetation for a period of two or three years with a force and universality which defied the class of precautions which are usually sufficient to prevent its ravages. Old dry timber became susceptible and was perished. Contact or contagion did not seem necessary to the distribution of the mischief; but the leprosy of timber, like that mentioned in the Levitical law, was so penetrative and universal, that nothing short of pulling away all enclosed structures seemed to have power to stop the destroyer. This pulling down, however, discovered a fact, that in the acme of this fungoid epidemic of the timber, plenty of dry air, with an active circulation well maintained, was a specific against the disease. The history of the unusual destruction of timber-work during the time referred to would, if examined, demonstrate the fact, that there then was a state of the atmosphere inducing an excessive energy of vegetative powers in the fungus of dry-rot, which is more easily comprehended than that dry dead timber should have acquired a
new and morbid susceptibility to the growth which so suddenly seized on its structure. This excessive tendency in timber to become pabulum for that vegetable, is not now among us as a costly infliction; but what has once occurred may happen again, and light and air as preservative means in houses can only be fully maintained by street-roominess. We find, then, that dead and dry timber has had its epidemical disease; probably the wood was but a passive sufferer, and the mischief may in this case have belonged to the undue activity of its vegetable assailant. But when we come to treat of living organized beings, we have to deal with creatures having a highly impressionable susceptibility of their own, prepared perhaps by exciting causes to receive the more active malarious influences which co-exist abroad and around. Climate, food, atmospheric poisons, and many other agencies have their action on all living organisms. Fruit trees are sometimes affected; so are timber trees. The grape vine now has some epidemic in the wine countries which brings diseases on the wood, the leaves, the fruit. The potato disease and its melancholy history have afforded a controverted page in the black book of vegetable epidemics. We cannot venture into the discussion here, but potatoes we know are less susceptible of disease than they were seven years ago. Onions had "a rot" not long ago; and, indeed, experience tells us that epidemics to plants, animals, and mankind are to be expected occasionally, and that it is our duty to take the best precautions we can against their aggravation, by inducing firm health and resistant energy wherever we know how to produce such a preservative power. The most alarming of our epidemics among mankind is the cholera. There can be little doubt that some unsanatory condition of the atmosphere is promotive of this disease; for during its access most people feel some occasional disturbance of the intestinal functions, while with very many that fearful bowel-fever known as cholera becomes an acute, and often a morbid disease. For a time facts were not carefully observed, and people thought this disease to be as occult in its progress as it still seems to be in its initiative causes; but men have recovered their courage, and, with it, both observation and skill in deduction. We now know that whatever are the conditions which induce choleric symptoms, any circumstances which prostrate the general health make the prostrated more susceptible to the attacks of cholera. A truly tonic power in mind and in body is then the best, if not an infallible, specific in epidemical times; and if this observation is based upon a sufficient foundation of observed facts, it becomes important to examine if there are not in existence far too many widely-acting public causes of depressed health, which induce a dangerous want of tone, and consequently expose multitudes of people to the debility which gives to disease its melancholy victories over human life. It is well known from experience that immoralities of all kinds are at war with man's healthy power. Drunkenness and all kinds of degradations bring with them this natural vengeance on the physical machinery. Nor does vice stop there, for the moral powers also become involved, and the mind of the vicious man aids in subjugating his dilapidated
resistancy. This is, however, what may be called the individual treason against our stronghold of health. We cannot dwell on it as it would be needful to do, but must pass on to the public and communal offences against the general stock of healthiness which we ought to have in store against any unexpected or even well-anticipated epidemical assaults upon our vital powers.

**FRESH AIR AND FULL SUNLIGHT.**

Ever since the fearful tragedy of the stifling in the black-hole at Calcutta, it has been an admitted fact that the effluvium exhaled from closely confined living animals is intensely malarious, and persons writing on the health-promoting conditions of society have usually demanded a free ventilation as very important. But these renovators have generally dealt with but one source of the evils of which they complained, namely, bad air within dwellings. The matter, however, requires a more extended examination, and those frequently confined places, from which buildings receive air, but not fresh air, demand sanatorial scrutiny. How often we find in towns structures intended to contain several residents placed where free aeration is impossible. Old prisons are usually situated in narrow streets, where the deep shade of high walls shuts out the sun-light, that most active means for circulating the air; their gratings let in a polluted atmosphere to have its malarious taint aggravated within, and then returned upon the narrow neighbourhood poisoned and poisoning all within its evil influence. Parish almshouses are often thus built in pestilential places; and though the languid life of old age find this but a slow poison, we know that young children, when sent at times into these dens, experience a frightful amount and rapidity of mortality. Long established hospitals, too, are frequently discovered in similar obscurity, hidden from the natural use of a disinfecting, and even actively healing sunlight, with free and pure air; even workhouses have been so unhappily located as to be much debarred from the advantages of those great elementary pabula which tend to sustain the health and promote power with a natural active energy. We are, then, unmistakably invited too often to trace to an outward cause the inward maladies in buildings, where people are grouped together in any number; nor are houses where single families reside indulged in any immunity for doing without the natural elements of healthiness; they, too, when living in narrow, dark, and damp streets, suffer from debility, the consequence of being hourly and daily unconsciously, but certainly dosed with slow poison. Look into our narrow streets; they are often pebble-paved; they are too much shaded from sunlight, and barred in from a fully circulating air to be dry or warm; "every pebble has its puddle;" and then a bad, untrapped sewerage, with a direfully cadaverous or death-dealing channelage, (a system of overground sewers,) makes the narrow ways filthy and foetid, in spite of brooms, for nothing but force-pump flushing can clean these places even in a temporary way; and then at the expense of a perpetual wetness. These circumstances describe some of the evils consequent on houses and walls being drawn into a too close contiguity in
towns; and whether the floating funguses, which close dampness
developes, pervade organic tissues or not, we know that dampness
is unwholesome; that a fusty foulness in the air is nauseous, and
that mildew in clothing, both linen and woollen, is mischievous;
while mould destroys furniture, pictures, books, and all that makes
the tasteful and useful decoration of modern domestic life.

METHOD OF A REMEDY.

Having thus expatiated on the evils produced by the narrowness
of streets and ways, I proceed to state some of the particular mea-
sures which a general, though perhaps very gradual, reform will
require. And first, what breadth should be considered as essential
for allowing access of sufficient sunlight, ameliorating sun-warmth,
and an unobstructed circulation of air in streets? I shall quote a
general if not a universal rule of practice from Mr. Loudon, the
eminent botanical writer. Among his voluminous labours, one of
his Encyclopædias is architectural, and in that work he treats on
this subject. It is curious that Mr. Paxton, also a gardener,
should have been the best practical contriver of structure where
the sun and its influence were glorious means of beauty and
brightness; the coincident tendency seems to have arisen from the
fact that both of these physiologists, having attended closely to the
means of health, vigour, and beauty in plants, readily transferred
their experience to the production of similar results by their adap-
tations of light and air in a more general application. Loudon's
law was this, that no building should be encroached on by any other
building placed nearer to it than its own height of distance; that is
to say, if the houses at one side of a street were sixty feet high, the
range of houses on the opposite side of the street should be sixty
feet distant. It is true, many handsome streets have a breadth be-
yond this, but as working every-day ways, this rule would secure to
streets light, dryness, and change of air. It would, of course, be a
great assistant advantage if all the corners of streets were well
rounded off, instead of touching other streets at a sharp angle; the
air would move more freely round the non-angular turn, the ap-
proach would show the opening street at some little distance by the
light round the corners, would give size to the juncture of the streets,
and would prevent vehicles from any danger of running against
each other. But to return to our chief topic, light and air. Loudon
carries his suggestion into flower culture and into foresting; he says
the health of flowers requires that the free earth should be seen
between them, not only because their proper nutriment requires
some individual space, but also because their energy is prostrated by
crowding. Again he says, "their form is lost if they have not a
power of being seen; it is only by a clear area of their own height
that plants can be seen—

"Gaily to bourgeon and boldly to grow."

And it should be remembered that the sunny side of flowers is
always the "most beautiful. Now, when they are over-crowded,
they cannot have any sunny side, and consequently their brightest
beauties are undeveloped. This law of visual effect is of some importance to the authorities of towns; it is but just to give the public the consequence which belongs to public building and good structures. Loudon tells us that every building which could hold in one apartment two hundred people seated, claims to be a public building. Under this rule, if accepted, would come in all places of public worship, halls of associations, and many similar structures. What architectural emphasis and importance a town would command, which should enjoy a circumferent isolation from other buildings of the same extent as its own height! and then the ventilation such clearances would secure, where the creation and aeration of public buildings would go together! But, dealing with street structure principally, we might follow the doctrine of Loudon safely, even into cottage economy. If a roof be but sixteen feet high, an alley of sixteen feet wide would not be a stifling space, conditionally that no loftier buildings obstructed the opposite side of the way. It is when houses are at both sides lofty, and the mid-way narrow, that the odiousness of the lanes thus made becomes at once noisome and dangerous.

Room to be healthy is, then, one of the great wants of cities and towns, and no greater boon could be offered, to the working classes especially, than houses of two stories high being, at least in front and rear, freed from the obstructing injury of any other buildings to the full breadth of their own height. One point more must be put in this prayer for the poorer householders, which is this, that all frontages should receive the light and heat, the dryness and cleanliness, which a south or an eastern aspect would confer and maintain.

Moore, our nation’s poet, knew the power of invigoration and joy which light confers, and often he has sung of it; but this blessing, which he repeatedly individualizes, we will make general, and in his words wish it to the multitude, thus:—

"As half in shade and half in sun,
This world along its path advances,
May that side the sun shines on
Be that which ever meets thy glances."

Groups of houses round areas separated by their own height at least, and three-sided, leaving the south open, would be wholesome hamlets for the working classes. No doubt, if a grass-plot or flagged square of a moderate size, and without trees or shrubs, could be bestowed as a centre-piece, it would add greatly to the pleasure of the residents and the health of the children; and by inducing the population to live much in the open air, it would improve the physical, moral, and mental strength of the occupying tenants. Such are some of the reasons, statistical and constitutional, for a great increase of street-roominess.