

## CAUSES OF DEGENERACY.

### ADVANCED VIEWS OF DR. A. B. ATHERTON OF FREDERICTON.

#### Interesting Paper Read at the Annual Meeting of the New Brunswick Medical Society—The Remedies Suggested.

(Special Despatch to The Globe.)

St. John, N.B., July 18.—At the annual meeting of the New Brunswick Medical Society here Dr. A. B. Atherton of Fredericton, president of the society, read a paper of intense interest to the medical fraternity and the public at large. He said, in part:—

"An inquiry into causes of degeneracy, which seems to be taking place among the more highly civilized branches of the human race, should be both interesting and profitable at this stage. I think it is too obvious for dispute that the civilized nations are undergoing some deterioration in their general physique, and, as well, perhaps, in their mental powers. The deterioration causes are those arising from our manner of life and those which are the result of bad breeding. In other words, we might say, we have the acquired and the hereditary influences which tend to degeneration. The frequency with which we medical men find cases of break-down of children of a nervous temperament or delicate constitution, due to hard study, shows the care with which the child should be watched, the girls in particular. Indeed, we have for some time been of the opinion that the public schools should be closed to girls for one or even two years, at the critical age, when an important physiological change is taking place in their constitution, on account of which they should not be placed in competition with boys of the same age. The proportion of defective eyes at the present time of school entrance is only 5 per cent., but by the time of college entrance it reaches 50 per cent. To the great evils of the abuse of stimulants and sexual immorality it seems impossible to put an entire stop. We must rather strike to regulate than to check them completely. In the matter of the better breeding of the race, we should at least take as much care as with the stock on our farms. Every child has the right to be born healthy and fit to fight the battle of life. We think the community has a right to demand that the diseased and defective ones should not transmit these characteristics to the rising generation. Marriage between such people should be discouraged or prevented. Have we not a right to demand that those who have been rescued from tuberculosis should not be the means of bringing children into the world who inherit a tendency to the same disease? Persons who have been relieved of tubercular tendencies should submit to being sterilized. Again, the marriage of near relatives is a source of danger to their progeny, who are apt to be born idiotic, weak-minded or chronic epileptics. I think it would be wise to prohibit such unions as those of first cousins. There are said to be over one thousand two hundred feeble-minded unmarried women in the Dominion. The danger of these women producing children affected in the same manner is great. These menaces should be segregated into public institutions, or, better, perhaps, should be sterilized. It is monstrous to allow these unfortunates to hand down their mental defects to the coming generation. The chronic criminal might also be very well subjected to similar procedure."