

The Fence or the Ambulance

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The Fence or the Ambulance

By Joseph Malins

'Twas a dangerous cliff, as they freely confessed,
 Though to walk near its crest was so pleasant;
 But over its terrible edge there had slipped
 A duke, and full many a peasant;
 So the people said something would have to be done,
 But their projects did not all tally.
 Some said, "Put a fence around the edge of the cliff,"
 Some, "An ambulance down in the valley."

But the cry for the ambulance carried the day,
 For it spread through the neighboring city,
 A fence may be useful or not, it is true,
 But each heart became brimful of pity
 For those who slipped over that dangerous cliff;
 And the dwellers in highway and alley
 Gave pounds or gave pence, not to put up a fence,
 But an ambulance down in the valley.

Then an old sage remarked, "It's a marvel to me
 That people give far more attention
 To repairing the results than to stopping the cause,
 When they'd much better aim at prevention.
 Let us stop at its source all this mischief," cried he.
 "Come, neighbors and friends let us rally:
 If the cliff we will fence we might almost dispense
 With the ambulance down in the valley."

Better guide well the young than reclaim them when
 old,

For the voice of true wisdom is calling:
 "To rescue the fallen is good, but 'tis best
 To prevent other people from falling."
 Better close up the source of temptation and crime
 Than to deliver from dungeon or galley;
 Better put a strong fence 'round the top of the cliff,
 Than an ambulance down in then valley!

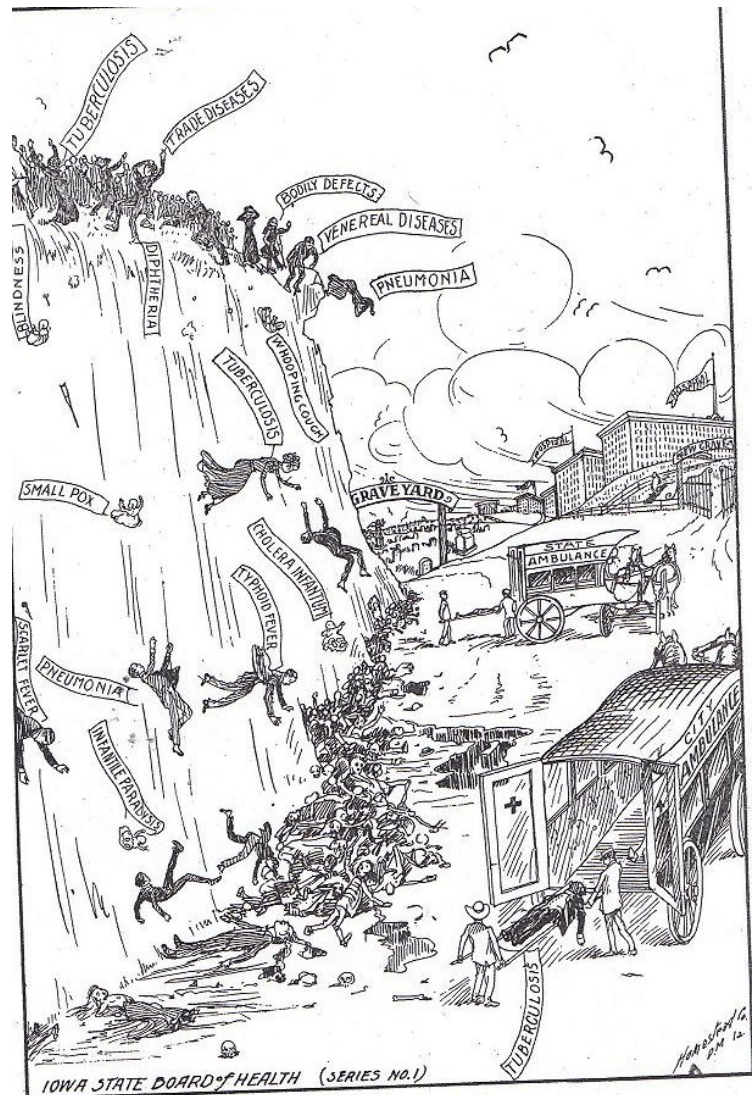


FIG. 2.—Illustrating the dangerous cliff without a fence.