

Corrosion of Lead in Water Pipes.

The following article, containing important information for a large class of the community, is from a late number of the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* :

“Mr. J. R. Nichols calls attention to a source of danger attending the use of leaden pipes used for the conveyance of drinking water, which seems to have been hitherto disregarded. Even if it be admitted that the water which is supplied to the city of Boston from Lake Cochituate, like that of most New England ponds, be such that it may be safely used after having passed through lead pipe under ordinary circumstances, it would nevertheless be wrong to infer that this water can be employed with entire safety at all points of delivery, without first inquiring whether special conditions may not exist in some localities by which the character of the water may there be changed. Having observed several instances in which the inmates of a single house had suffered from lead disease induced by the use of aqueduct water, while the inhabitants of other parts of the city, supplied with water from the same original source, were unaffected, and having in one instance detected the presence of considerable quantities of lead in one of the cases first mentioned, while no reaction for lead could be obtained from a specimen of the same aqueduct water taken from another locality, the author proceeded to inquire into the cause which produces this lead impregnation in certain houses or districts, while the general waters of a supply remain unaffected. He has noticed in the leaden pipes removed from cess-pools, sinks and wells, that the intensity of corrosive action had been in a great measure confined to the sharpest bends and depressions in the pipe, while in some instances other portions remained intact. “I have in my possession,” he says, “a section of supply pipe, removed from the aqueduct of a neighboring city, in a portion of which corrosive action had proceeded so far as to cause leakage. The part thus acted upon was confined to an acute angle, and there is evidence to show that the plumber, in placing it in position, bent it in the wrong direction, thus creating the necessity for another turn in the opposite. This pipe had doubtless been subjected to two violent turns, which seriously impaired the homogeneity of the metal. An examination of lead pipe removed from buildings will certainly show that where there has been any perceptible amount of decomposition, it has been confined to the angles and depressions in its course. There are three causes or agencies which may perhaps be sufficient to produce these results:—1. The disturbance in the crystalline structure of the metal by bending, whereby its electrical condition is changed and voltaic action promoted, giving rise to chemical decomposition. [Together with the galvanic action which must be induced wherever connections or faucets of copper, or alloy, are fastened to the leaden pipe, or where a crack or fissure in the latter has been filled with solder.] 2. The presence of organic matter, such as fragments of leaves, and impurities pervading pervading all pond waters, and which may be detained in angles and depressions of the pipes. 3. Corrosions may be produced in lead pipes by the accidental presence of pieces of mortar. Where mortar is present, the lime would assist in oxydizing the metal, and also aid in the solution of the oxyd. Considerable portions of fresh mortar are frequently deposited in lead pipes, during the erections of buildings. When the family commence the use of the water, it holds the salts of lead in solution, and its presence may be detected for months. The process of oxydation, which is retarded or prevented altogether by the presence of neutral salts in water, could not be materially interfered with under the conditions considered. It is obvious, if these observations and conclusions are correct, that much care

should be exercised in placing pipes in position in buildings. In those leading to the culinary department, angles and depressions should be avoided. Violent twists and turns should not be permitted, and during the erection of houses, the open ends of protruding pipes should be carefully closed. Assuming the general fact that pipes, conveying the waters of our New England ponds become coated and protected by an insoluble lead salt, the question arises, how long before this protection is secured, or, how soon may a family commence the use of water passing through new pipes, with safety? In view of the manifest danger from local disturbances, the most sensible reply would be, never. A section of new lead pipe, immersed in Cochituate water one hour, at a temperature of 65° Fah., gave a decided lead reaction with sulphydric acid. Removed and placed in six fresh portions of water one hour each, the waters, when tested, give similar results. The experiment continued during two weeks. Varying the time of immersion in fresh portions of water from one to ten hours the lead indications continued, although at last feeble. These results are sufficient to show that individuals or families should not commence the use of water flowing through new pipes, until considerable time has elapsed, and much water contact secured.”

TO INVENTORS AND PATENTEES IN CANADA.

Inventors and Patentees are requested to transmit to the Secretary of the Board short descriptive accounts of their respective inventions, with illustrative wood cuts, for insertion in this Journal. It is essential that the description should be concise and exact. Attention is invited to the continually increasing value which a descriptive public record of all Canadian inventions can scarcely fail to secure: but it must also be borne in mind, that the Editor will exercise his judgment in curtailing descriptions, if too long or not strictly appropriate; and such notices only will be inserted as are likely to be of value to the public.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Correspondents sending communications for insertion are particularly requested to write on one side only of half sheets or slips of paper. All communications relating to Industry and Manufactures will receive careful attention and reply, and it is confidently hoped that this department will become one of the most valuable in the Journal.

TO MANUFACTURERS & MECHANICS IN CANADA.

Statistics, hints, facts, and even theories are respectfully solicited. Manufacturers and Mechanics can afford useful coöperation by transmitting descriptive accounts of LOCAL INDUSTRY, and suggestions as to the introduction of new branches, or the improvement and extension of old, in the localities where they reside.

TO PUBLISHERS AND AUTHORS.

Short reviews and notices of books suitable to Mechanics' Institutes will always have a place in the Journal, and the attention of publishers and authors is called to the excellent advertising medium it presents for works suitable to Public Libraries. A copy of a work it is desired should be noticed can be sent to the Secretary of the Board.