

THE SANITARY JOURNAL.

Communications solicited from Medical Men and others on all subjects pertaining to
Public Health.

VOL. II.

TORONTO, FEB. 1ST, 1876.

No. 2.

INFECTION AND CONTAGION.

There are several ways in which contagious elements may be introduced into the human system. The portals are the lungs, the stomach, the skin. By other ways occasionally, probably, poisons may find ingress, but they are so exceptional as to require no particular notice. Of the ways mentioned doubtless the lungs constitute the most frequent avenue by which zymotic poison finds its way into the system. Constant breathing is necessary for continued life ; and every individual must inhale, no matter how impure the air. But the poison is often so subtile as to escape the notice of the senses. In entering the air cells, the air comes into close contiguity to the blood which passes through the lungs for the purpose of aeration ; and it may, and often does as it receives the oxygen, have imparted to it the most deleterious elements.

Occasionally, perhaps more frequently than is supposed, the stomach becomes the gate through which the seeds of disease are conveyed to soil suitable for their growth and development. Not alone may the poison be carried by food and water and other fluids ; but the air may be the vehicle by which it is taken into the mouth where it is lodged upon the mucous surface. In time the fluid of the mouth becomes contaminated, and is then swallowed. By these various carriers the elements of contagion may possibly be introduced into the stomach. It does not always follow, however, that the poison thus gains a foot-hold in the system. Ere the poisonous organic matter is absorbed it may be so decomposed as to render it innocuous, or, being carried to the liver by the portal vein, it may be brought away again in a discharge of bile. Sometimes though, the liver is inadequate to accomplish this, and in failing,