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THE VENTILATION OF HOUSE DRAINS.

It is truly remarkable that it is such a very difficult and tedious matter as it proves on trial to be, to instil into the public mind the reality of the existence of imminent dangers, of a most subtle and stealthy nature, which lurk within many households, especially in cities, from defective drainage, particularly as regards soil and waste-pipes. That there are such dangers, dangers almost wholly preventible, if they could but be recognized as such by the general public, that annually destroy thousands of lives—not unfrequently those most valuable, is alas! but too well attested.

In cold weather, when the temperature of rooms is for the most part much increased, and is much above that of the outer air or that of the sewers, and with windows and doors carefully closed, dwellings stand in the position of exhausted receivers placed over prolongations of the sewers, for such, in fact, disconnected soil and waste-pipes really are. Ordinary water-traps are utterly powerless in resisting the suction forces thus set up; and yet it seems almost impossible to shake the abiding faith in these yielding contrivances.

Many question the value of water-closets and sewers. They are great mechanical improvements, while they are, as at present constructed, undoubtedly great carriers of disease. W. C. Merrifield, F. R. S. &c., in a paper read not very long ago at the annual meeting of the British Association, said:—"As applied to the particular problem of getting rid of waste products, especially solid products, I do not think they were any improvement at all on much that we already had. In many towns in Great Britain, where there previously existed a well understood and well carried out scavenging system, I think they have done more in saving trouble than in conducting to health." This is putting it mildly enough.

It is urged that the fault is not in the system, but in improper and defective construction, and in want of proper ventilation in connection with the system. In this there is much truth, yet probably the time will never come when there will not be a good deal of danger from bad material and bad workmanship.