

THE DUTIES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE MUNICIPAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

BY

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Gentlemen,—It is not my intention to-night to attempt to read before you a paper on hygienic science. The most recent medical graduate is better qualified than I am for such a task. But through force of circumstances, I may say political rather than medical, there has been assigned to me the chairmanship of that civic committee under whose control fall many matters concerning the local health.

Now no one is more anxious to see the department placed upon a satisfactory basis than I, therefore at the outset of this arduous undertaking I desire to secure the sympathy and the co-operation of that class of men in the community who are naturally most interested in and best informed concerning the public health. I should like to have the medical men of Montreal realize that any suggestions that they may be willing to make for the improvement of our department will be welcomed, I should also like to have them possessed of a realization of the difficulties, in order that they may be patient if the accomplishment of their ideals appears delayed in arrival.

Prior to the advent of the present council the local Board of Health had charge of two distinct departments. First, the work of the collection and disposal of the scavenging, night soil, and dead animals; secondly, that of dealing with questions concerning the public health. Owing to the fact that the scavenging department gives employment to upwards of 200 men and that the appointment to a seat upon the supervising committee conveyed with it the power of giving employment to many labourers, positions were sought on this committee, as formerly constituted, mainly by aldermen more interested in the distribution of patronage than in the protection of the public health. For the past two years I have sat upon this Board, charged with the performance of this double function, and I have felt, over and over again, that should an epidemic attack our city, the municipal committee, that would be called upon to act, would be wholly inadequate for the occasion.

Almost the first reform which the new council undertook was to separate these two wholly diverse departments and to place each different work under a committee of its own.

The committee on Incineration, as it is now called, is charged with the