

practitioner depends upon the patronage of the public, and should be willing to do for the public at large a service that costs very little time and trouble and is attended with no expense. It is a fortunate feature of the law that it requires the attending physician to report a contagious disease as soon as it is suspected. For that reason the public receives the benefit of a doubt. The necessity of reporting to the health office all deaths, with the causes, in order to get a permit to bury, puts the doctor on his good behaviour. A few attempts to return croup for diphtheria, spotted fever for scarlatina, &c., have been met with an order for a coroner's inquest. Inability to make a diagnosis has sometimes been urged as an excuse by delinquent quacks, but one or two criminal trials soon revealed to them that the responsibilities of assumed knowledge cannot be avoided by a plea of ignorance. In some instances doctors have prematurely reported recovery. The law of duration in contagious diseases is too well known to allow such heedlessness to escape notice and rebuke. It is sometimes disagreeable to supplement the mental and moral defects of a portion of the profession by the terror of criminal law, but faithful sanitary administration requires it.

2. At first the people objected to having their houses placarded, as a violation of personal liberty. A little argument convinced reasonable citizens that no man has the natural or acquired right to expose his neighbors to deadly contagious disease by concealing it in his own house. Personal liberty to give small-pox to somebody else had better be abridged as soon as possible. Personal liberty to send scarlet fever into a school with your child is rather diabolical than beneficent. Personal liberty to infect a

church with a diphtheria corpse is tempting Providence to start an epidemic. But many were beyond the reach of argument. A fortunate accident of legislation solved the problem. The alternative was placed before them of quietly submitting to the placarding process, as provided by city ordinance, or of being subjected to absolute quarantine in their houses, as provided in the charter. A law-abiding community submitted, and today the system of placarding, if it were left to an election, would receive an overwhelming majority of votes in its favor. Experience proves its value in many ways to the citizen. He knows and feels that, by reason of it, his family is more secure against diseases that cost money, anxiety and sorrow.

#### ESSAY ON THE ADULTERATION OF FOOD AND DRINK.

In the December number of this JOURNAL we gave extracts from the report of the Committee of Award in connection with the prizes offered by the U. S. National Board of Trade for the best Act, accompanied by an essay, for regulating the sale of food and drugs. Below we give one of the essays sent in; the author of which is O. H. Wright, M.D., Health Officer, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. From Supplement to the *Sanitary Engineer* for Dec., 1880.

"Truth, like a torch, the more it's shook it shines." In discussing adulteration of food and drink, the best way is to tell the truth about the subject, or so much of the truth as one happens to know. Any exaggeration of statement, with the mistaken view of arousing public attention to an increasing evil, only alarms the innocent, while it produces no effect upon the guilty. An attempt to allay public fear, by making light of a real danger, only increases the apathy of the many,