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THE OVERHEAD VENTILATION OF SEWERS.

BY WILLIAM OLDRIGHT, A.M., M.D., TORONTO.

[Read before the American Public Health Association at Detroit, Michigan, Nov. 13-17, 1883.]

The object of the brief paper which I am about to read is to obtain a consideration by this Association of the question whether it is preferable to discharge sewer-gases, as is now done in many of our cities, into our streets on the ground level, amongst wayfarers, who are continually passing over the street ventilators and on all sides of them, or to discharge them at points above the tops of our houses; and in considering it we must bear in mind that in the latter case the gases are to be distributed through a large number of outlets at short distances apart, whereas in the former they are discharged through openings few and far between, and are, therefore, much more concentrated and injurious.

Let us leave out of consideration all side-issues, which, though germane to the subject, have no more bearing on one side than on the other of the particular question proposed. I know some will say: "Attack the main cause of trouble, the existence of decomposing matters in sewers." So we should; but there still remain gases in sewers, and the question now before us is, What shall we do with them? The numerous defects to be met with in house plumbing, and the means for preventing sewer-

gases from passing into our abodes, through the drain-connections, have a very important relation to our subject; but, as these have been fully treated by various members of this Association, and I have recently expressed my views on them in an address reported in the annual report of the State Board of Health of Michigan for 1882, and more fully in the latter half of a pamphlet on "The Disposal of Sewage," published a short time ago by the Provincial Board of Health of Ontario, I do not intend to take them up at the present time, for it will be readily admitted by all that, so far as the interiors of our houses are concerned, the plan which should be adopted is that which will secure the greatest immunity from the presence in drains inside of houses of noxious gases in concentrated form.

Let us then address ourselves to the consideration of the question whether sewer-gases should discharge at the level of the road-bed, or into the air above the roofs of the houses. I do not think it will be necessary to spend time in impressing upon such an assemblage as this the fact that to inhale the gaseous contents of sewers is not conducive to health. Even if a system of sewerage be so well conducted that the sewerage is removed from it (changed) every twenty-four hours, I do not think we can say there is no danger from inhalation of gases from the excrementitious products and washings of persons ill with infectious diseases. I may, however, call to the attention of some who may not have noticed