

EVENTS

Published Weekly.

Vol. 8, No. 10.

OTTAWA, SEPT. 2, 1905.

Whole No. 336

The Ottawa Isolation Hospital.

ALL civilized countries have a general law conferring on a local body certain powers for the regulation of the public health. The health of private persons is in their own custody. Some Canadian cities have by-laws compelling citizens to have the house chimnies cleaned every time the boss sweep makes the demand. This rather arbitrary proceeding was taken for the purposes of fire protection. In Ottawa, and perhaps in other places, the powers conferred by the Public Health Act are taken advantage of to intimidate citizens whose children are attacked by contagious disease. Most children take scarlet fever at some period of their juvenile existence. The attending physician is required to report such cases to the Medical Health Officer employed by the city. That officer goes to the house and advises that the child be sent to the Isolation Hospital and kept there for from six to eight weeks. He assumes to have the power to take the child away from its parents

against their will and judgment. He does not say that the parents can make a choice. He assumes that the locality will not be properly protected. The parents are led to believe that he has the power to compel. In one case in Ottawa a child developed diphtheria and the officer ordered the child to be removed to the Contagious Diseases Hospital. The father refused and undertook to isolate the child at home and look after it properly. The official said he would send for a policeman. The citizen, who was able and willing to incur whatever expenditure was necessary to the case, telegraphed Toronto for legal advice and received a written opinion signed by Messrs. Barwick, Aylesworth, Wright & Moss to the effect that the Medical Health Officer was exceeding his authority. Outside of the particular case these eminent legal counsel laid down the general rule, as follows:—

The Public Health Act provides that in case any disease dangerous to public health