

HOUSEHOLD SANITATION.

BY NORMAN WALKER, M.D., TORONTO.

There are a few matters about the household which, if not attended to, delay and in some cases prevent the recovery of a patient. Any carelessness in regard to the plumbing, the water supply, the food storage, or the ventilation of the room or building in which a patient is should have attention drawn to it by the doctor in attendance.

Plumbing that is seven years old, and more especially any still older, requires to be overhauled. Closet fixtures of ten years ago were complicated in design, and experience has taught that they were filthy and unhealthy in use. The pan closet and the valve closet are antique contrivances which have outlived their usefulness. They have been superseded by the cleanly, one-piece earthenware or china bowl, with its ventilated, water-sealed syphon trap. Water-sealed syphon traps were in use more than ten years ago, but the fact that when there were two or more traps connected to a soil pipe each trap must be ventilated, to prevent syphoning, was not yet accepted, and it was not till still later that continuous automatic ventilation of the drain and soil pipe was attained. Now, the house drain must be disconnected from the street sewer by a trap; a ventilator is placed on the house side of this trap, which allows the fresh air to enter the drain, pass into the soil pipe, and thence out above the roof, the soil pipe being carried up full bore.

The plumbing in old houses is not effectually cut off from sewer air by a trap, the drain and soil pipes have not got a stream of fresh air passing through them continuously, and the traps throughout the house are not ventilated to prevent the water-seal being broken, therefore old plumbing requires to be gone over, and new plumbing should be inspected to see that these points are attended to. Bad material and workmanship need not be spoken of here; it is only the principle.

Old privy pits with pervious walls, allowing the surrounding earth to become sodden with organic matter, should be replaced by dry earth closets. For manure purposes the value of the fluid excreta is to the solid excreta as five to one, and hence if the contents of a dry earth closet are used before the fluid evaporates, a material gain will be effected.

No matter how well ventilated, a closet should never be placed in either a bedroom or a living-room of a house, as is sometimes done in the North-West, for the sake of the warmth in the winter. The closet should be arranged in a passage way, or else the excreta should be taken outdoors, emptied into a tight barrel, and disposed of on the land in the spring.

Water, whether stored in a city reservoir, or in a barrel as it is caught from the roof, tends to become putrid: guard against this by getting as pure water as possible, and by frequent cleaning of the receptacle. The first water collected from a roof should be rejected, because it contains impurities from the atmosphere and dirt from the roof; other wise rain is the source of purest water supply.

Buying a filter is like paying taxes—it goes against the grain. A man feels that the water should be so pure that a filter would be unnecessary, but as long ago as the time of Moses water came out of a rock. That rock must have been a permeable one, and to-day the best water we get comes through permeable rocks, either in their natural beds or else through a filter with a piece of rock as the filtering medium. Most filters have some cleansing power, but very few are any good after a month's use. People think that a filter should go on forever doing its work without requiring any attention. Medical men should take the trouble to impress the people that their filters should be cleaned, and that frequently. The best filter is the one which when dirty will not allow water to pass: in fact, it works automatically, and the servant soon finds that, in order to get filtered water, the filter must be kept clean. Filters such as will come up to this standard are unglazed porcelain, special kinds of earth or sand pressed into blocks, or blocks of sandstone cut so as to form a reservoir, or cut in discs and cemented in so as to form the bottom of a crock. Flannel, wool and sponges should be absolutely condemned. Charcoal acts by arresting any suspended matters, and by oxidizing organic matter that may be dissolved in the water. This oxidizing action is only retained for a short time, and then if the charcoal is not cleaned and dried or renewed, it gives up the impurities to the water again, and so in the end is worse than no filter at all. Spongy iron forms a good medium for a domestic filter.