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## The Canadian Engineer.

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### SANITARY NECESSITIES.

BY W. M. WATSON.

I have lately received a couple of clippings out of the Montreal "Witness," from a friend, together with a mild request that I should express my opinion on the facts they contained, publicly if I had the opportunity. Probably if I fully complied with the gentleman's wishes, I might place myself in a similar position to that of a plaintiff, who was addressed in the following words, by a late chief justice in England, when appealing the heavy damages that the jury had inflicted upon him for libel, viz.: "My experience in this court of such cases as yours is, that the law is too often used to punish the person who is unwise enough to speak the truth."

The clippings give the remarkably high death rate in Montreal, comparing the figures to the death rates of similar large cities, which are about one-half as heavy. If Dr. Reid, who prepared the statistics, would go a little farther and tell the public the actual death rate of the English-speaking citizens, and that of those who speak other languages, a little more light would be shown to an outside reader. Let Dr. Reid turn up a Montreal "Star," dated November 4th, 1885, and he will find that the statistics prove that the mortality for October in that year was 1,391; out of this number 1,286 were French-Canadians, 65 others belonged to the Catholic faith, and only 40 out of the whole number

were English-speaking Protestants. That was the time when the preventable disease of smallpox was epidemic in Montreal. Between the fine houses of Montreal, among the wealthy, and those of the very poorest of the working-class is found a very unnatural gulf. The first-named class is allowed from 600 to 6,000 cubic feet each of enclosed air space to live in. They are heated in cold weather, by that healthy apparatus called low pressure, indirect, hot water heating, which gives them a splendid ventilation, as well as a warm, soothing temperature. They enjoy the best sanitary appliances, and take daily baths. They are surrounded with appointments that are pleasing to the eye, and are served at table by expert cooks. There is, within one mile, a large manufactory of white lead, etc., the men who do the work and benefit the general public live near the works, in houses built over swamp-holes; they have not a single thing within sight of their windows that has a pleasant effect, they possess no gardens or flowers. The rooms and rear yards are so small that in place of having the regulated amount of 600 cubic feet per head of interior living space, they cannot measure more than 200. In winter they crowd together in one room, with every crevice where the air can pass in and out of the room to change the sickening atmosphere passed up with paper. Their heating is done by the air passing over the red-hot plates of an iron stove, which destroys the air that the inhabitants should be breathing, and the inmates are gradually destroying their own respiratory organs and poisoning their blood. The poison these workmen are liable to, when working, gives them but a short time to live, but this time might be largely extended, if the city authorities would do their duty. Why should the street opposite the doors of the poor dwellings be ankle deep in mud and festering garbage. The area around their houses should be considerably larger than at present, and the houses built on clean and wholesome foundations. Could not the City Council afford to give such working-men good swimming baths in each district, handy to get at, and provide for everyone to enjoy, at a small, but probably paying-price, a good wash. I know that many people will remain in a stifling room with apparent enjoyment, that other people would not tolerate one hour; and this is probably the reason why our French brothers suffered so badly in the year 1885 from smallpox, and are at present in a lesser degree doing the same each year. This is not the fault of themselves, or anything in their social or religious life, but of the shameful and openly corrupt city government. But while it pampers the class that is wealthy enough to pamper itself, it cares nothing for the poor, and still allows the barbaric system of earth cesspools to do duty for privies, to foul the soil the people live on, and to emit a united sickening odor into the air the unfortunate inhabitants are compelled to breathe.