

SULPHUR AS A DISINFECTANT.

The Civic Hygiene and Statistics Committee have decided that, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, the by-law specifying sulphur as the disinfectant to be used by the Board of Health should be carried out to the letter. There is no appropriation for the purchase of anything else than sulphur, and sulphur it must be. Dr. Laberge, the medical health officer, in his report, stated that some persons objected to sulphur and desired to use something else. But the committee repealed all former resolutions, which permitted the parties most concerned to select and pay for their own disinfectant, and decided that, as the by-law says sulphur, they cannot sanction the use of anything else. Of course, sulphur is cheap, nasty, and useless for the purpose, but obedience to the by-laws is a matter of greater moment than aught else. So all objections are swept to the four winds, and, in the disinfectant of the Board of Health, sulphur must be used, and sulphur only, until some amendment to the present by-law makes it possible for the Hygiene Committee to use a satisfactory disinfectant.

Now, without knowing upon what the members of the Committee base their belief in sulphur, we are almost unwilling to animadvert further on this important matter. Yet we cannot refrain from expressing surprise at their action. Surely they know that sulphur as a thorough and satisfactory disinfectant has long ago been discredited by those best able to pronounce upon the matter in question. The subject has long passed the realms of debate, and so general is the knowledge of the uselessness of sulphur that we think something is due in the way of explanation from the guardians of the public health. During an epidemic of some years ago, we made the most exhaustive enquiry into the efficacy of sulphur for disinfecting purposes, and we were assured that, however much value might be placed upon its use in an absolutely bare room, sulphur possessed no virtue whatever as a germ destroyer in furnished dwellings. The demand for formaline and modern disinfectants, now in use all over the civilized world, is a very natural and proper expression of unbelief in sulphur, and we cannot refrain from giving expression to the very general dissatisfaction with the action of the members of the Hygiene and Statistics Committee. We should be sorry to see any existing by-law disregarded. But the citizens would not surely have complained if, knowing the uselessness of the expenditure upon sulphur, the gentlemen to whom this matter was submitted by the medical health officer had used their judgment instead of deciding to "carry out" an absurd by-law "to the letter." We regret that it is as it is, and that sulphur as an agent for removing the causes of infection is to be used despite the wishes of intelligent citizens, and merely for the purpose of conforming with a by-law. The reason advanced for retaining sulphur for purification purposes is an insult to one's intelligence.

THE CANADIAN BANK ACT.

(Fifth Article.)

THE CHANGED CONDITIONS.

It is one of the weak points in commercial law that it is not so fluid as the commerce it is intended to control. A law that is ideal for one period may, in a very short time, prove unsatisfactory for another. Law is the crystallization of proper custom, but, as long as customs are absolutely fluid in character, as many are, they are very likely to flow outside the planes of crystallization or be impeded by them. This is the primary cause of the necessity for a decennial revision of the Bank Act. Banking is the focus of all trades, and alters as they or any one of them alters. The wise regulations of to-day may prove the restrictions of to-morrow. The latitude permitted to-day may to-morrow prove a dangerous license. Ten years ago, it was not imagined that our banks would be actively and importantly engaged in forwarding gold mining industries, although the Act provides for the contingency by authorizing the banks to deal in bullion. To-day, on this account, there is no provision in the Bank Statement, besides "Other Assets" for the recording of a bank's holdings of gold bullion.

This is only a minor point. Other changes of utmost importance have been taking place in the methods of banking in Canada, to which no Government desirous of modernizing the Bank Act can shut its eyes.

A comparison of the bank statements for December, 1891 and 1899, will bring some of these changes to light.

The capital of the Canadian banks during that period has increased only from \$61,209,000 to \$63,584,000, while the note circulation, which is based upon this capital, has increased from \$35,634,000 to \$45,909,000. Even adding the increase in Reserve, about \$6,301,000, the increase in note circulation exceeds the increase in capital and reserve by very little less than the amount to the credit of the Note Circulation Redemption Fund. But that this fund restores the equilibrium will probably be one of the arguments in favor of retaining it.

When we consider the public deposits, however, we see why banking has become less profitable and in one sense more dangerous. In 1891, the demand deposits were \$62,649,000, last December, they had increased to \$99,463,000. The public savings deposits, virtually on demand, increased from \$90,158,000 to \$173,769,000; the total public deposits, therefore, show an increase of \$120,425,000, the increase amounting to nearly twice the capital of all the banks. In view of the timidity of the average deposit, a timidity usually exhibited when confidence is most requisite to avoid panic, it must be confessed that the banks are required to maintain a much larger proportion of readily available assets now than in the past, and the question suggests itself whether it is not now wise to frame a clause in the new act for the purpose. We purpose showing that the banks themselves have properly moved in this direction.

Current loans and discounts, the general business loaning of the banks, show an increase of \$80,000,000. This reflects the progress of the country to a large extent, as the deposits indicate its profits. The small increase in the value of bank premises from \$4,463,000 to \$5,977,000, indicates that the banks retain a healthy horror of investing heavily in this direction,