

HINTS TO HEALTH OFFICERS.

It may be stated as a broad fact that most diseases, for the prevention of which a medical health officer, especially in a city or town, may be called upon to exercise his skill, have their origin in or through excrete matters, more particularly human excreta, finding their way into the human body along with the air, or water, or even sometimes the food consumed.

There are three principal causes of disease with which a health officer may practically and profitably deal : (a) Foul air from collections of excreta or filth of various sorts ; (b) foul water from wells ; and (c) patients suffering from contagious diseases, as centres from each of which hundreds and even thousands of cases may arise.

In the largest cities even in Canada, there are some crowded tenement houses and cheap boarding houses which cannot fail in various and obvious ways, to give rise to disease, and to the spread of epidemics, and which demand the attention of the health officer and authorities. If these are not better looked after, we shall soon have in this country, as in the older countries, outbreaks of true typhus. There are such places in Toronto, furnishing the very soil and conditions where typhus would doubtless develop and spread, were the germs once present—or, if it be possible that such diseases ever arise spontaneously (which we doubt), develop without the germs.

All cesspools and privy vaults, when not far removed from all dwellings and wells of water-supply are, in the light of our present knowledge of sanitary science, truly nuisances, and we do not see why, without a special municipal by-law, they cannot be dealt with—removed under the provisions of the present public health Act (36 Vic., cap. 43). This provides that health officers may, in the day time, as often as they think necessary, enter into and upon any premises within their jurisdiction and examine the same, and “if upon such examination, they find that the premises are in a filthy or unclean state, or that any matter or thing is there which, in their opinion, may endanger the public health, they or any two of them, may order the proprietor or occupant of the premises to cleanse the same, and to remove what is so found there.” There being further provision, in case of neglect or refusal of the proprietor or occupier to remove the same, by which the officers may have it done forthwith, and the proprietor or occupier will be compelled to pay for it.

We should like to see this matter tested in the courts. And why could not foul wells, too, be dealt with in like manner.