Library and Laboratory

CURRENT PERIODICAL COMMENT AND WORKING NOTES

Our Boards of Health and the Fly.

The first great duties of a Board of Health, as the *Quebec Chronicle* notes them, is to see that the people within its jurisdiction have fine air to breathe and clean water to drink. We were told the other day by our worthy Mayor, that journal further remarks, that the conditions of some parts of our sewerage system was not under the immediate supervision of officialdom. We need no Board of Health to tell us that the air we have to breathe, whenever an automobile passes us, is unfit for our lungs, while we have only to hold up a glass of the city water to the light to see for ourselves that it is not safe to drink it without having it boiled. Nor is Montreal one whit better off than Quebec is—in fact, not as well off—either in the matter of pure air to breathe or clean water to drink. Now, however, the fly above everything else has had public attention drawn to it as a carrying agent of typhoid germs. But no man or woman needs much of an encouragement to go for the fly. Mr. Musca is a nuisance, and we all know it, and we have been steadily going for it for ever so long with every kind of contrivance purchaseable that would lead to its decimation or extermination. But the Montreal Board of Health does not seem to think we know all about the little pest, and so has issued a circular to every ignoramus and intelligent person in that city that might well frighten every mother's son and daughter of them out of their wits over the plague which every little sinner of a fly carries under his wing. Moreover, where is the circular about the dust and the smoke and the water that is being served to us every day? One automobile will provide more poison for our lungs while passing, than millions of flies would supply us with; and everybody knows that the water the masses have to drink in the big city is a big city of microbes of itself all afloat. We know what the phrase means: "Straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel." And, while we sympathize with our Boards of Health in going for the gnat for all they are worth, we would make less light of their enthusiasm if they would turn their attention once in a while to the unwholesomeness of the canal as well—that is, to the unsanitary condition of the air we have to breathe and the water we have to drink.

Schoolroom Ventilation.

Dr. W. A. Evans points out in the *Chicago Tribune*, that schools are usually well lighted but poorly ventilated. In fact, they usually suffer from too much, rather than too little, light. Nor has he ever been able to see much danger from schoolroom dust. But, he says, in ventilation, including regulation of temperature and moisture, conditions are bad. They are unfit for grown people to stay in, to say nothing of children. It is the fault of ventilation methods, which are overdeveloped on their mechanical side. They are so bad hygienically because they are so good mechanically. Why?

All school ventilation by a mechanical system is based on the idea that the carbonic acid gas of a room is poisonous and we must add enough diluting air to keep its percentage down. We know now that carbonic acid gas is nearly harmless. Rosenau has shown that there are harmful chemicals in air that has been breathed, but not even this alters the opinion that the proper plan is to remove and not dilute.

A ventilation system which is based on the dilution of breathed air is inefficient, and, at the same time, expensive. It is wasteful because it requires 2,000 cubic feet per person per hour, while, if the temperature is kept down, the humidity up, and the rooms are blown out from time to time, a much less quantity gives much better results. Dr. Evans hopes school administrators will read his opinions thus expressed.

Mechanical systems are faulty for a sec-