

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## AN URGENT SANITARY REQUIREMENT.

To the Editor of the "CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS."

SIR,—A gradual advance seems to be in progress in dealing with those subtle and invisible influences which convey to a population the seeds of infectious disorder, and we can hardly be too grateful for the patient and laborious efforts on the part of men of science in old and to some extent also in new countries, by which certain fixed results have at last come to be eliminated as the result of years of steady and indefatigable research, but one would suppose that when influences most hurtful to human life lie on the surface, and are visible to the most cursory observer that they would be dealt with with promptness and with a firm and unsparing hand; but this we find is very far from being the case. There is a sad hiatus between the action of the scientists and of the public and governments.

The condition of our steam boilers, our drainage, our ventilation and heating, the want of open spaces for health and the freedom of harmless recreation, with other matters quite as urgent, are all evils of a palpable and evident character that have long been urged upon our notice as a people, but hitherto without results. On some of these there are differences of opinion, on others a pretty general agreement as to principles, and only parties and coteries to be placated. We have been educated in all the feebleness of will, rather than of mind, which attached to the old colonial relation—and the development of our national life must now be a work of time and patience. If we possess less spirit and energy than our neighbours across the border, which we need not be too ready to admit, we have certainly fewer corruptions to battle with, and can afford to hope much from the present aspect of our political future.

Our chymists have not been wanting in affording us a vast amount of information in regard to such matters affecting, as they do, the comfort and the very continuity of our daily lives, but the public who lean upon governments and organizations for everything in the shape of action, go on very much as before in all that relates to what they eat and drink and imbibe through the pores, and the temperature and ventilation of their dwellings and places of assembly. There is a sad paradox here—an apparent avidity for instruction from the professors of natural science—and an utter apathy when the time comes for following it out to practical results. In fact until we get the necessary organization and laws into actual working, we shall go on as we have done for the past twenty years, reading our newspapers, sometimes with shuddering and pain, but for all practical action, helpless as ever. The mischief we may believe to arise in a great measure from our people never having been grounded in the school and the lecture-room in those first principles of the science of physics which are truly and indispensably necessary for the government of their daily lives. Would that the preceptors of youth would take thought a little of those vital requirements as well as of the claims of modern languages, classics and pure mathematics for the growing population they have to educate into men and women. Languages and calculations are useful enough in their proper sphere, but they form after all but the means by which more useful and practical truths may be attained. In the absence of correct moral and physical ideas, they are as nothing. It is our earnest hope then, to see this important and life-giving knowledge a great deal more general than it is at present, and I feel sure that many of our best citizens would be delighted if government would interpose not only for providing such instruction, but also for the direct saving of the lives of the people from destructive influences. Now, I do not wish to inflict a long discussion upon first principles upon your readers, but desire to-day simply to try to call their attention to an evil which, though it has been occasionally noticed, is as far as ever from meeting with a remedy. I refer to the chemical horror and nuisance of green wall-papers upon the surface of the rooms in which we live or transact our daily business. Wall papers generally are the better no doubt, as regards the health of cities, for being frequently changed, but it is one particular colour that is now chiefly imperilling the lives of our families, although almost all the green tints, having more or less of copper in their composition, are bad. The colour I refer to is the Emerald or Paris Green, composed of copper and arsenic in chymical combination.

What a madness, it will strike all who stop to think about the matter, to allow the dust of one of the most deleterious substances in the whole range of matter to mingle with the air we are breathing, to cling to our clothes, and to be constantly imbibed along with all that comes within our lips! Though I have called it madness, the strange neglect will be found more strictly to arise from inadvertence—from the idea of the noxiousness of this dreadful destroyer not being impressed through the needful chymical knowledge upon the minds of the people. They are told the thing is poisonous, but they do not believe it. Were they possessed of those rudiments of chymistry and physiology we are speaking of they would believe it. When the Colorado Beetle has to be driven from our potato crops, some genius at once thinks of the horrid stuff he sees upon his own parlour walls, and says, "Let us try the Paris Green!" and it is found to answer perfectly, over whole acres of the pest, and that in a very diluted form. What a practical lesson we have here! Whether he is wise in allowing it to come near the fields that produce his food is quite another question. The startling paragraphs I have extracted below are from a newspaper published some time since, and I adduce them to show what the Emerald Green really is in its ascertained effects upon the human subject. The narrative is headed "Another Victim to Artificial Flower Making," and before examining it, it may be well to mention that no real artist has any greater love for the detestable colour than has the physiologist in its relation to the life of human beings. It is a crude vulgar colour that harmonizes with no other. Only a strong gas-light makes it tolerable. The following is the extract:—

"An inquest has been held at the Silver Cup, Gray's Inn Road, on Matilda Scheurer, a good-looking girl of 19 years of

age, an artificial flower maker, who was deprived of life by the deadly effects of poison imbibed into the system during her engagement in the manufacture of artificial flower leaves. It appeared that Emerald Green, chymically termed *Arsenite of Copper*, was used in the manufacture, and that death was produced by the inhalation of that poison while at work, producing acute inflammation of the mucous membrane of the stomach. The employer stated that he had ninety-eight girls in his establishment, and for the purpose of their preservation he had suggested the wearing of masks, but it was objected to by them as producing excessive heat. They however wore muslin over their mouths. Deceased had been ill before from the same cause. The jury returned a verdict to the effect that death was caused by 'Arsenite of Copper.'"

This poor Matilda Scheurer, a girl nineteen years of age, living with her widowed mother, was seized with illness about a fortnight before while following her occupation as an artificial flower maker. She complained of pain in the side and intense thirst, and symptoms of arsenical poisoning were soon afterwards manifested. On the following day a doctor saw the girl, and told the mother that she was "again" suffering from the effects of poison. Within a period of eighteen months he had attended her four times under similar circumstances, and during nearly the whole of this time she had complained of severe pains. She kept to her work, of making "green leaves," and at last became so impregnated with poison that her death must have been almost inevitable. She "was in the greatest pain until she became insensible," and in this state she remained until her death. A *post mortem* examination "proved beyond the possibility of doubt that she had been poisoned by arsenic used in colouring the green leaves." Her body "was of a greenish yellow colour; the nails were very green;" arsenite of copper was found in the lungs, and, in short, the entire frame was charged with the deadly poison. The unhappy mother had previously lost another daughter through the same cause. The green leaves—emblems, when seen in bonnets, of untimely and cruel deaths occasioned by woman's vanity—were first moulded out of wax, and then "emerald-green powder," full of arsenic, was sprinkled over them. The medical man who attended poor Miss Scheurer states that the "emerald-green" was as light as magnesia, and as easily blown about. He has had many cases of poisoning by its means, the usual indications being eruptions on the face and neck.—And this is artificial flower-making! This is the trade we see advertised as "lucrative and easy."—The trade which thousands of respectable girls, with but slender means of subsistence, "or with no means at all," are invited to enter, and are glad to follow! There is a fate yet more deplorable than that of slow poisoning by arsenic, and these luckless girls have no alternative but to accept the one or the other."

I do not offer this as a very recent instance,—but that matters little. The sad facts are for all time. It is a fearful story, and one that reflects sadly enough upon the pitiful littleness, to say no more, of our modern civilization. For a mere toy we are constantly allowing lives to be destroyed. As to the wall-papers we are looking upon every day, the influences of the poison are not so acute—but the doses are far from homœopathic—are positive enough—are imbuing carpets and furniture covers with the subtle poison, which, mingled with the dust of the room, will be present everywhere, and will exhibit its effects in a painful delicacy of health—in the young especially. The nuisance should cease. We must for once in our history act with promptness, and in addition to removing the abomination from our walls, and discarding fancy articles containing it, which foolish people in Europe are continually foisting upon us,—we should certainly obtain from our able Finance Minister, Sir Francis Hincks, a promise or a hope that the colour, as to all articles containing it, will be made contraband in the Tariff List of 1872.

If any one knows of any other remedy likely to prove effectual, let him advance it. The plan I advocate would be in all respects righteous and proper, and would greatly conserve Canadian life.

The assistance of your powerful journal in bringing it under the notice of the Queen's loyal subjects in this Dominion will be highly appreciated by,

Yours faithfully,

X.

17th Feb., 1872.

## THE EXPEDITION AGAINST QUEBEC IN 1759.

To the Editor of the "CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS."

SIR,—Mr. W. Wymond Walkem has now published in your columns his promised explanation. Its tone and spirit are such, that if I were simply personally concerned, I would be most unwilling to occupy your space with any reply; but I feel it due to you to state how I came to forward the communication I did.

During last winter, I was introduced to Mr. Walkem, senr., who took occasion to say to me that he had seen on the table of his chief (Col. Hamilton, R.E.), a paper by me on the *Military Operations at Quebec in 1760*; that he had been so interested in it that he had gone to Middleton & Dawson's book-store to procure a copy, but had failed. I gave him one. Some short time thereafter he called on me, and stated that he had just discovered, among the papers in the Royal Engineers' office, an old and interesting manuscript on the capture of Quebec. I expressed my pleasure, and said I hoped he would read it to the Literary and Historical Society, then in session; he hesitated, but expressed a wish that I would call at the office next day and inspect the document. I did so, and had not read through the first page when I at once pronounced it to be a copy of Mr. James Thompson's journal, the original of which was then in my possession; but I added, "That will make no difference, Mr. Walkem; the Society has not seen the manuscript; you can still read it, and we will have it published." He replied he would think of it. A few days after this, he asked me if I could show him Mr. T.'s journal, and next day I took it down to his office and compared it with the manuscript in his possession, when I pronounced them as nearly as possible *verbatim et literatim*, and not, as Mr. Walkem

makes me say, *verbatim et literatim*. Again, Mr. Walkem called on me and asked me if I would permit him to take home the Thompson manuscript that he might copy the concluding remarks. I gave him the manuscript. When he returned it he had in his hand another manuscript, which he held out to me, saying, "not having much to do, I have copied the *Moncrief* manuscript, as I find it is not in every respect similar to the other." I asked him to shew me in what respect, when he did point out a few discrepancies, and I endeavoured to explain that such discrepancies occurred every day in copying manuscripts, especially when they were not properly *verified*; and I took occasion to show him where he himself, in copying this very document, substituted a word *entirely inappropriate* for one it contained. Some short time after this, having occasion to call at Mr. Walkem's, he introduced the subject, and at once expressed the opinion that the Thompsons were *humbugs*, using pretty much the language which his son has used, I think with very questionable taste. He, on this occasion, for the first time, hinted that he considered Mr. Thompson, jr., fearing exposure, had erased the memorandum or certificate which I have since published—or, to use the modest language of his son, "But *Dr. Anderson* has very carefully concealed the fact that *Jas. Thompson, sr.*, displayed unusual common-sense in erasing the foot-note in red ink." I pointed out to Mr. Walkem, senr., as I subsequently did to his son, that the note was not erased, but merely crossed with a few red lines, leaving every word as distinct as when it was first written; and I ventured to state my impression that I thought it would be better, instead of supposing that Mr. Jas. Thompson, jr., had in the first place committed a literary forgery of which he afterwards became ashamed and afraid, and had made a bungling attempt to conceal it,—that it would be better to believe that when, at a subsequent date, he had added the two pages, he had simply crossed his note with red ink, as an intimation that his narrative was not there ended.

Mr. Walkem has directed my attention to the erasure of the word *Engineer* and the writing above it of the word *Volunteer*. This he wished me to take as an additional evidence of Mr. Thompson's dishonesty. I preferred to view it as arising from his desire to be exact and strictly truthful. His father was not an Engineer of the expedition, but simply a *Volunteer*; and though he was in 1775 called upon, and was then the only one in Quebec competent to discharge the duty of an Engineer, he was at the date he wrote his rough notes a volunteer in the 78th Highlanders. After this interview I carefully eschewed any conversation with Mr. Walkem on the subject of the manuscript.

But it seems Mr. Thompson, jr., has not only committed a literary forgery, but he has deliberately lied in writing over his signature that his father had been offered and declined the appointments of Town-Major and Barrackmaster, preferring that of Superintendent of Military Works, conferred upon him by General Murray in 1761. Mr. Wymond Walkem writes: "It is a common failing amongst most people, to make out, in regard to their ancestors, a most favourable, and, I will say, sometimes romantic account of their position; and this brings me to that claimed for his father in the Engineers by the younger Thompson. He held no such rank as Superintendent of Military Works, as the son would wish the reader to believe." This is written by a young man, just of age, who was a sojourner for a few months with his father in Quebec. This youth, who really knows nothing of the matter, also writes: "I really cannot imagine how the senior Thompson was capable of keeping a daily journal, for which, from his position as an ordinary soldier, and his education, he was unfitted. How was it possible for him to become acquainted with all the minute information detailed in the manuscript, unless he occupied some important command in the expeditionary force?"

The last part of this extract I shall answer first, because it is the language which was used to me by Mr. Walkem, senr. I on that occasion replied to him, that during the Crimean war we were indebted to volunteers and common soldiers for some of the best accounts ever given of what then occurred. But I shall now ask, did this Major *Moncrief* occupy any "important command?" We know that Major *McKellar* was the commanding engineer of the expedition of 1759-60, and that when he was incapacitated by being wounded, Captain Holland was placed in command; but I can find no mention anywhere of any officer of the name of *Moncrief*, though I certainly shall not venture to say that there was no such officer occupying an inferior post; but for all the evidence Mr. Walkem was able to produce to me, Major *Moncrief* may have been cousin-german to the celebrated *Mrs. Harris*.

In reference to Mr. Thompson's position in life, there will be found in the *Quebec Star*, of 8th Sept., 1830, an interesting memoir of Mr. Thompson, then just dead. The *Star* was under the control of Dr. Wilkie, Mr. Andrew Stuart, and one other gentleman of equally high position, whose name I am not sure of; but I know the present Rector of the High School, though then very young, was on the staff; and it is to him I am indebted, many months ago, for having directed my attention to the memoir. In that memoir we are told that Mr. Thompson volunteered to accompany to America his cousin, *Captain Baillie*, of the 78th, to whom he was very much attached; that on his cousin being killed in one of the boats, at the landing at Louisbourg, having been recommended to the patronage of Col. Fraser, he remained with the regiment, and served with it at the siege of Quebec and the capitulation of Montreal, and after its disbandment was "attached to the Royal Engineer Department as *overseer of Works*, in which he continued until the year 1828, being a total period of service of seventy-one years." The memoir then alludes to General Murray's offer of the Barrack-mastership and the Town-majorship, and adds, "Mr. Thompson's services were eminently conspicuous on the invasion of Canada by the American army in 1775, there having been no commissioned officer of Engineers present at the time."

I may here mention that Mr. Thompson, senior, generally signed his name thus: "James Thompson, *Overseer of Works*." There can be no doubt, if we accept the *ipse dixit* of Mr. W. W. Walkem, that Mr. Thompson, junior, has lied on more than one occasion; but we ought not to be surprised at this, for it was an amiable weakness which he inherited from his illiterate father. This man has had the audacity to write, and his friends to publish, as follows:—"Holding the situation of *Overseer of Works in the Royal Engineers' Department, Quebec*, I had the superintendence of the defences to be erected through the place, which brought to my notice almost every incident connected with the military operations of the blockade of 1775; and from the part I had performed in the affair generally, I considered I had some right to withhold the Gene-