

## STERCORACEOUS EMANATIONS AS A CAUSE OF DISEASE.

The agency of effluvia and of subterranean percolations from human feces, in producing various forms of disease, is considered by many medical writers as a well established fact. The odor of feces is reported in some cases to have given rise to severe epidemics. Cholera is said to have been propagated in this way, and also by percolation from privies into wells at some distance, though the water may appear to be quite pure when tried both by sensible and chemical tests. This fecal theory is the best theory extant for strategic purposes. Wherever man is, feces must be near at hand; and a lively imagination can always trace the subtle poison rising in the air and entering the lungs, or sinking into the earth and impregnating the water of springs and wells, and thus reaching the human stomach. Take the following illustration, from no less a personage than Dr. Anstie: "A country town, without deep drainage, disposes of its sewage in cess-pools, and the limited space in which the houses stand renders it inevitable that the drinking wells should be within a very short distance of the cess-pools. From the latter a continual oozing of decomposing organic matter takes place, and more or less of this finds its way into these wells. For years possibly no particular harm can result. But at length there was a long, dry summer, which reduces the water to a low ebb, and concentrates the impurities, besides favoring decomposition. In such circumstances typhoid fever breaks out among the persons who drink the water."

Now it so happens that this description applies exactly to the city of Oakland, and has applied to it every year since its existence, and yet there has never been a typhoid epidemic in the place, while several sparsely settled rural districts in Alameda county, where the water of springs is used, which could by no possibility be impregnated with such impurities, have been frequently visited by that disease. It is worthy of note that no account is taken by Dr. Anstie of the 'long, dry summer which reduces the water to a low ebb,' as a climatic cause of disease. There is overlooked in his etiology only as it affects the water, whereas, every one knows that just such summers are favorable to ordinary autumnal fevers in all malarious regions of country