

Of quite as much importance to the health of municipalities as specific sanitary measures for cleaning up particular districts, are regulations for the safe and sanitary construction of buildings.

Three particular duties that every community cannot afford to neglect are: A thorough system of vital statistics, medical inspection of school children and stringent safeguards against soil pollution. Each of these important duties lies directly within the province of municipal and state government.

Without a record of deaths and illness, a city can do no more than grope half-blindly, however zealous its efforts may be to improve and foster public health. There must be definite knowledge concerning the time and localities where diseases, especially contagious diseases, occur, before any considerable headway against them can be gained. Vital statistics are as essential to a community's health as a system of accounting is to the stability and progress of a business institution.

Many cities have already learned the great benefits of medical inspection in the public schools, though it is doubtful if even yet we fully appreciate the value of this system.

Soil pollution is more of a rural than a municipal problem, though in its ultimate effects it is a menace to town as well as country life. The pollution of the soil gives rise to water pollution and may bring impurity in food and milk supplies, thereby establishing a "vicious circle" which, in the long run reacts unfavorably on every member of the community. In suburbs and country districts there is no matter of more vital importance than that of the hygienic disposal of sewage.

Despite the fact that measles is one of the commonest, most widespread, and, by reason of its complications, most dangerous diseases, it is not in many places notifiable. The reason is perhaps a paradox. It is not notifiable apparently because it is so dangerous, so common, and so widespread that the local health organizations are afraid to tackle it, and because it is very difficult to diagnose in the early stages.

Measles—like the other infectious diseases—is part of the price we pay for the slums. In the slums measles breeds continually, the infection passes from one to another, sometimes affecting many cases, sometimes only a few, but always smouldering. At certain times the poison of the disease appears to become more virulent, and sallies out from its breeding places to attack those who live outside the poorest parts. Then it is no respecter of persons.

No feature of social life is more easily made the means of spreading disease than the poor lodging houses. Men from all points gather there, making these places natural incubators of disease. It is impossible to determine in advance either the character of the patrons or their state of health. Without the strictest of supervision it is easily possible for a victim of some disease to spend a day or night or several days and nights in such a place, and to pass on to some other occupant an infection that will be carried out to some neighboring or remote part of the country. The conditions that have been allowed to develop in the lodging houses have been such as to breed disease when it once has gained entrance, and to encourage its entrance. Under the old form of management the lodging houses have thus become a menace to public health.

It possibly will be urged that the men who occupy the lodging houses are satisfied with conditions as they find them there. It might be urged with equal justice that the child is satisfied with his natural ignorance of reading, writing and the other elements that go to make up a common school education. Yet we compel the child to attend school, and go to great expense to insure his education. These men are as greatly in need of instruction in cleanliness and health as the child is of instruction in the elements of education; we owe them quite as much as we do the child; and the fact that the conditions with which they are surrounded in the lodging houses constitute a menace to public health makes our duty to them even more imperative, if any thing, than that owed to the children.

To teach these men the theory of cleanliness and health is good; to furnish them with surroundings that are a continual object-lesson in the line of that teaching is a