

MUNICIPAL ENGINEERS, CONTRACTORS, AND MATERIALS.

A NOVEL IDEA.

The Health Department of Milwaukee has had a disinfecting service in operation over three months. Its principal feature is a large disinfecting chamber mounted on wheels and resembling a furniture mover's van. This chamber is lined with iron, and between the lining and the wooden covering of the chamber is a non-conducting material. A small steam launch boiler, using oil fuel, is placed in one corner of the van, and steam radiating pipes are extended from it over the walls and floor of the chamber. The radiating surface is sufficient to heat the interior of the chamber to a temperature of 250° F. When a case of contagious disease occurs, the disinfecting van is driven to the house, and carpets, clothing, furniture or any other portable articles, which may have been infected, are placed in the chamber and kept hot sufficiently long to insure the killing of all germs. At the same time the interior of the infected rooms is fumigated, and other sanitary precautions are taken. The apparatus is inexpensive, and seems to accomplish its purpose much better than the ordinary disinfecting station, to which articles are carried for treatment.

THE LOWEST TENDER.

Among contractors and local authorities this question occupies the same position as that of the weather with the general public. It is always to the front, always interesting, and always personal. Most contractors wax very wroth when their tender is lowest and they are for some reason or other—the reason being mostly of an inexplicable nature—passed over. It has been left for the Whitechapel authorities to suggest the latest remedy in order to avoid offence. The proposition is in the first place to ascertain the persons willing to tender, and then to weed out objectionable names by not supplying the specification of work to be done. It seems to us that such a scheme is practically unworkable, that offence would be given by withholding specifications just as offence may now be given by passing over the lowest tender. Besides, although many a person might be willing to tender in the abstract, he might not be so willing to tender on seeing the specification. Often and often a specification details requirements which are subjected to patent rights, and the manufacture of apparatus that is also so subject or is a speciality of a particular firm; hence the tender of the controlling firm is the only one likely to be accepted, and other firms save the trouble and expense of preparing a tender. Of course there are scores of cases where the work required is perfectly open to every tradesman pursuing that industry, and the points we have mentioned would therefore not count, but it is always wise to see the exceptions possible before laying down a hard and fast rule. Although there are numerous difficulties to be met in free and opening tendering, we are pretty well convinced that the system is the best for all public bodies to adopt. Contractors are, after all, but human, and have to allow for the eccentricities of some strange decisions as to lowest or other tender. Thus Messrs. Jones and Fitzmaurice, of Birmingham, have been asking the Leamington Town Council why their tender was passed in favour of

another £70 higher. During the discussion one of the councillors remarked that it would be more respectable, when it was not intended to accept the lowest tender, if it was from an outsider, if the following were put at the bottom of the advertisement: "The tender of no stranger will be entertained."—*Contract Journal*.

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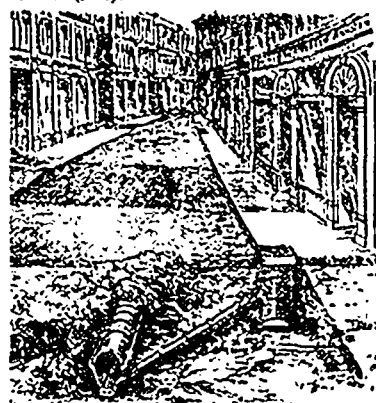
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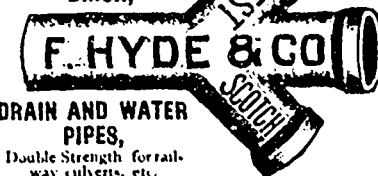
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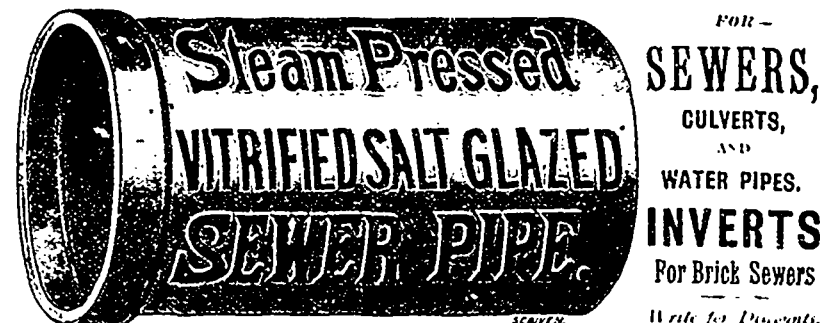
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