

Leading Articles.

THE WORK OF MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICERS.

In the October number of this JOURNAL we drew attention to the desirability of medical health officers paying special attention first of all to the proper disposal in their respective municipalities of the daily excrete matters, especially human excreta, in order to prevent pollution of the air and, especially, the drinking water supply; air and water polluted by the excrete matters, specific and otherwise, being by far the most prolific cause of disease. We also then drew attention to the desirability of health officers next giving their attention to the milk supply—the cows, that they be not diseased, the byres and the dairies, that there be no case of infectious disease in persons connected therewith. We now propose to refer to the isolation and disinfection of cases of infectious disease with the view of preventing the spread of the disease.

In arranging for the prompt suppression of outbreaks of epidemic diseases in a municipality, the authorities must necessarily provide for notice being given to the health department of every case of infectious disease. In Ontario, the last public health Act requires this notice to be promptly given in all cases. It does not appear that there has ever been any opposition to this measure, though seemingly there has been much indifference, such as there usually is at first to all measures of this nature. The health authorities in the municipalities in this Province would have little difficulty now in overcoming this indifference and obtaining information of every case. And in the other Provinces, until a similar law is passed, which it is greatly to be hoped will not be a very long time, where there is a local health board, arrangements might be made whereby like notice would be given by the medical practitioners in the locality. And in this connection we might draw attention to the article on another page on "the management of epidemics," especially, as referring to this particular point, to the last paragraph but one.

Having learned that there is a case of epidemic disease in any family or house, very much might in most cases be done by the health officer visiting the house and representing the great importance and practical value of careful isolation and disinfection in preventing the spread of the disease even to other members of the family, where such exist. While vastly more may be done as a rule where a law bearing upon such cases is in force, much may doubtless be done amongst intelligent people, even in the absence of such a law, by advice and persuasion, and where there is the law, a little timely reasoning will aid greatly in having it properly carried out. The quarantine should be as strict as it is possible to make it—the stricter, of course, the less likelihood is there of the disease spreading. The patient should be in the highest or most out of the way part of the house, and communication between the sick and the well should be reduced to a minimum—confined indeed to physician and nurse, and when necessary, the health officer.

The process of disinfection may be considered under two different aspects—that during the progress of the disease, and that affected by the health department after the termination of the disease. The first is the more important of the two. As the *Glasgow Sanitary Journal* properly has it, "disinfection to be of any avail, must commence at the very beginning of the illness and be carried on to the termination thereof. To allow a case of illness, from an infectious disease, to proceed to its termination, and then to evoke the aid of the Sanitary Authorities in the so-called disinfection of bundles of clothing, soiled linen and bedding, and in the fumigation of the house is, in most cases, a mere sham." "The first and most important step in practical disinfection consists in the isolation and imprisonment of the contagium, the final destruction thereof being a comparatively easy matter. In fact, the destruction of the contagium is in general a necessary sequence of its isolation and imprisonment. But if the contagium be allowed to escape and to diffuse itself throughout the whole of