

importance. Microbic life is connected with decomposition of organic matter containing nitrogen in its constitution. Decomposition is accelerated or checked by outside circumstances, such as the presence or absence of air; it is also influenced by temperature, by moisture, and the presence or absence of other agencies, as is proved by the action of antiseptics and germicides. We may even advance a step further and say that without decomposition there is no development of microbic life, this is an important factor in the consideration of sewer air.

Let us now inquire as to the nature of the decomposition which promotes the formation of these organisms. As experience is gained we become more and more convinced that there is no known means whereby any such organism arises without the

previous introduction of a parent germ of the same kind; that the spontaneous origin of such germs is not likely to happen, though no doubt in the case of some kinds of disease germs, such as that of typhus-fever, the dormant organism is an ever-present commodity, as much as that which gives rise to the blue mould in cheese. It is also established by experiment that a germ may be made more malignant by cultivation, or by cultivation may be deprived of its malignancy. It is upon this fact that vaccination is found to be prophylactic against small-pox, and Pasteur is able to prevent the spread of splenic-fever among cattle, and take out the sting of hydrophobia, by giving rise to a disease of a similar but of a milder type though in the last-mentioned this may be only a choice of two evils.

ADVANTAGES AND DANGERS OF ELECTRIC LIGHTING.

ABSTRACT OF A PAPER ON "ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION," READ BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE, NEW YORK, JUNE 7TH, 1889, BY HAROLD P. BROWN, ENQ., ELECTRIC ENGINEER.—FROM THE SANITARIAN.

THE air will no longer be polluted with smoke, for one immense station provided with triple or quadruple-expansion engines and furnaces, in which combustion is complete, will supply heat, light, power, and motion. The consequent addition to human health, comfort, and length of life by the banishment of dirt and noise will be enormous. Electrical disinfection and sewage purification are already in use, and since we can command immense volumes of electricity, it is not improbable that a better understanding of the laws of meteorology will enable us to at least partially control the weather, and thus avoid the evil effects of severe changes and extreme temperatures.

But to off set these advantages earth and air are filled with wires, many of which may be charged with swift and invisible death, which may overtake the most cautious in a myriad of unseen ways. If, then, the near future is to see a thousand electrical horse power distributed where now we have but one, it is clearly the physician's

duty to point out the dangerous currents, and it remains for the lawyer to secure wise legislative action preventing the adoption of systems or apparatus which needlessly jeopardize human life or health. The list of deaths from electric lighting numbers, though incomplete, over two hundred in the past few years; yet it must be borne in mind that not one street in a hundred or one building in a thousand is as yet lighted by electricity, and not more than half the house lighting now done is the work of the continuous current used at a pressure that cannot possibly prove fatal. Dangerous electrical systems are being rapidly installed in all parts of the country and in the interests of human life and health prompt action is imperatively demanded.

The only safe and proper course is to have a thorough examination made by unpurchasable medico-legal experts, and laws in accordance with their recommendations submitted and urged for passage. But it may be said that the laws already in force