

In the states best off with respect to health laws recorded on their statute books, the proper enforcement of these laws is never carried out. Observe the anti-spitting law enacted only a few years ago. No law was more proper, but in the beginning, when an arrest for its violation was made, it was so unusual a proceeding that the ensuing brief court proceedings were likely to find their way to the front page of the newspapers, and for days thereafter the cartoonists were busy with their humorous pencils creating and nursing a spirit of mockery, so often fatal to the public good. The law prevailed, nevertheless, more through the effects of ingenious placarding of the statute than a fear of legal apprehension, or an honest belief that disease was spread in this manner.

Laws looking to the prevention of contamination of food and drink commonly are allowed to lie peacefully within the covers of the books of law, seldom to be disturbed. The screening law, calling for the protection of foods exposed for sale from the explorative activities of the deadly house fly, was observed where there was no apparent way out of it, but the screens, when provided, were often improperly constructed, and since they were more or less of a nuisance to the owner in discharging his wares, were never more than partly effective.

Campaigns for Pure Water Supplies.—No one can gainsay that in progressive states the majority of the movements looking to the improvement of public water supplies originate in the health department. Especially is this true where the community is small, and where the water department officials do not feel warranted in employing relatively expensive men who are technically trained in water analysis and matters in general relating to water pollution. Then, too, the officials of large cities often are slow to act in such matters, and too prone to fall back upon arguments based on the financial inability of the community to carry through the construction of water purification works. It can be stated unqualifiedly that no community, whatever its size, is too poor to have a pure water supply. It is better to have had streets, grade crossings, and inadequate public buildings than to tolerate a public water supply of questionable purity.

Grade crossings are a menace to life, to be sure, but not nearly as great a menace as a bad water supply; and they are more often abolished for the sake of convenience than as a measure of public safety. Good streets promote business and the public comfort, but such improvements do not measure up on a level of importance with a supply of pure water. Attractive, roomy and light public buildings are a matter of common civic pride, but it is doubtful if they tend materially to increase the efficiency of those who labor therein.

Of all public works, the waterworks is by far the most important, and should always be given preference in the allotment of moneys for the city's maintenance. Ever since it became known that bad water was dangerous to health the public has been entitled by sovereign right to receive pure water. Bad water will put out conflagrations as promptly as pure water, but it also will cause widespread disease, which is more important. In the last thirty odd years the loss in vital capital through typhoid fever alone was over three times the net property loss from fire in the United States.

It is the customary design that the waterworks department of a community shall be self-supporting, but it is rare that large sums of money are kept on hand to defray extraordinary expenses in the department. When questions arise as to the adequateness of the

supply as regards volume, or more satisfactory distribution, little difficulty is experienced in obtaining the necessary funds to carry out the work, for the comfort and convenience of the public are affected. With improvements in the supply respecting purification it is different. When a city of a hundred thousand people is confronted with evidence furnished by its own officials and those of the state health department showing that the water supply requires purification, and learns that works to effect this end will cost, say, \$300,000, there follows an energetic sharpening of pencils to ascertain how this is going to affect the tax rate. There is strong opposition to the movement from the very beginning.

The state health officials, realizing the necessity better than anyone else, order that purification works be built. The cost thereof being estimated, the matter of a bond issue to carry the expense is put up to the people, and very often is defeated. Then an extension of time is allowed, and the matter drifts along for years without any definite advance.

Many cities have endured an excessively high typhoid fever death rate for years, and withheld the financial support necessary for the furtherance of measures of prevention, even when it was plain that the public health of the community would be immensely benefited thereby. Great cities, such as Baltimore, Cincinnati, Louisville, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Washington, temporized with the matter for years before building purification works, and in the meantime thousands of their citizens were needlessly killed by water-borne diseases. Then they built filter plants, and it is safe to say that if a candidate for public office in any of these cities should advocate the abandonment of filtration, he would stand as much chance of election as the proverbial snowball has of existence in Gehenna. The people in these cities now realize what pure water means to them, and while at first reluctant to believe, actual experience of the benefits has turned their minds just as far, or farther, in the opposite direction.

Laws have been enacted giving to the state the power to force the purification of public water supplies within their boundaries. The so-called Bense Act of Ohio is one of these. There is need of more legislation of this kind, which leads to the protection of the public against itself. Such power, placed in competent hands, and with sufficient funds to enforce it, cannot but do immeasurable good. Too much reliance is put in moral suasion in such matters nowadays. The money can always be found if it has to be found, and many a man has put off the urgently necessary visit to the dentist because of the physical pain incident to such a visit and the strain on his pocketbook; but he is always happy and satisfied when it is all over.

It is precisely so with forced expenditures of public money for water purification. The thinking citizen realizes that he is taking a chance with disease every time he drinks a glass of contaminated city water, and yet is ready with excuses, chiefly of a financial nature, for not helping along the campaign for pure water; but no matter what he finally is compelled to pay for it, when he realizes how he has been benefited he is perfectly satisfied, even though for a time he is obliged to go without new paving in front of his house, apologize to visitors for his antiquated city hall, or something of the sort.

Contaminated Wells.—The excreta of typhoid sufferers always should be thoroughly disinfected, but the cases are very numerous where it is either not done at all, because of the unpleasant labor involved, or done in