

## The Public Health.

The care of the public health is paramount to all things, for unless a people are healthy they cannot attend to business and the municipality suffers. Therefore, it is that in all communities laws affecting public health matters are of necessity more or less arbitrary, for many, without regard to consequences, will not observe hygienic or sanitary rules and so endanger their neighbors as well as injure themselves, which latter is not of so much moment. With this knowledge and that of the absolute need of protection from all sources of disease, the Legislature has from time to time passed laws governing health matters and conferring various powers upon boards or officials to act for the care and protection of the public health.

## REPORT CONTAGIOUS DISEASES.

The public health law requires the physician and all others knowing of contagious diseases in the municipality to report the same to the board of health officer. At first sight it may appear the reporting of some of these is superfluous, but a little study of the reason for including all will satisfy the most skeptical that full knowledge of the existence of any of them in the municipality is of moment to the public health.

Typhoid fever, while not considered contagious, should call the health officer's attention to its cause. Is it an isolated case? Then, perhaps, it may have been contracted elsewhere, and due care of the discharges by the doctor and those in attendance will prevent its spread. If several cases are present or developing, some direct cause is at hand, and the health officer's attention is first directed to the water supply. He, as health officer, should investigate the cause of the outbreak, and, reporting to the board the result, measures may be taken that will be of permanent benefit to the health of the community.

## PHYSICIANS AND PUBLIC HEALTH.

The relation of the doctor to the board is important. He is of the profession that must deal with disease, and in his hands the physical well-being of some portion of the inhabitants is placed by them for care. He should be of the first, therefore, to aid the health authorities in their work of rendering the place where he lives more cleanly and healthy, and, therefore, more attractive to settlers. When called to a case of contagious disease, he should promptly notify the health officer, and aid in taking all precautions against spread. While this duty may be and is called for by the rules of the board, it is also called for by higher motives than mere obedience to the mandates of health authorities; it is in the interests of all the inhabitants that contagion should be guarded against, and to no one more than the doctor. Where, in his daily rounds, he sees matters in such an insanitary condition as to be of menace to health, he should use his influence to have them

changed, and if that fails, advise the board that it may take measures to do so. The aid physicians can render to constituted authority to improve the sanitary condition of a municipality is greater than most doctors think, for they are fitted by their studies to understandingly pass upon such subjects, and the people naturally look to them for guidance in matters pertaining to health.

## INDIVIDUAL EFFORT.

If more general knowledge of what tends to improve the public health could be disseminated, more support would be given the efforts of those who try to carry out the law. If citizens would aid in making their municipalities healthy by seeing that no insanitary condition exists on their own premises, both they and their neighbors would be better off. If owners of tenement houses would see to it that such places were in and of themselves sanitary, the health authorities could more easily guard against the danger from disease coming from the inmates. But it is found that such work is more than neglected. Where the poor, from necessity, have to crowd together in buildings with improper drainage, which is enough of itself to cause disease, the chances of sickness breaking out and spreading is greatly increased. The people may be but able to earn enough for the bare necessities of life, and with scant and poor food the condition of the body is depreciated. Add to this, conditions which they cannot control; impure air, foul emanations, from drains and other places, insufficient ventilation of rooms—matters which can be prevented; and a combination is effected which one can only wonder does not cause more disease in our closely-settled districts than is shown by statistics. Certain diseases, when grafted in such places, become almost endemic. The germs find fitting soil in which to grow, and, though lying dormant at times, appear in some cases never to entirely die out, asserting their presence from time to time when atmospheric conditions are such as to further their activity, when nothing short of most energetic measures will eradicate them. Those owning such places should understand the danger is not confined alone to those living therein. It may be carried by the tenants to houses where they work, houses in which science and ample means combined have in every way rendered as safe from disease as human ingenuity can make them, and cause death to the more favored inmates. Insanitary conditions in the better class of houses are equally dangerous. The danger may not be so far-reaching, but it is close to the dwellers, and their own interest is to remedy it. Still it is found too often the health board must make peremptory orders to save the people from themselves. It appears that money expended in such matters is considered as money wasted, for nothing shows for the expenditure, and belief of danger is not easily induced until practical

experience of its presence has caused a loss more deeply felt than that of the almighty dollar.

## A PUBLIC DUTY.

In the social economy all must do their part for the maintenance of the municipality and law and order. This is a self-evident proposition, for without it no common policy could be maintained, and a relapse into the old style of "might makes right" would follow. So in the matter of protecting the public health, charged by law upon legally constituted bodies, whose authority is recognized by all, the great work must be participated in by others not officials if the welfare of the community is to be properly preserved. Unless the people support the officers charged with the execution of the law which they, through their representatives, have enacted, the will of the people becomes absurd and of no avail.

## SUPPORT THE LOCAL BOARD.

The work of the health board, therefore, while its performance is to be carried on by those appointed to the office, is one in which all not only have an interest, but all should bear their part. When conditions of menace to health are known to exist, information should be given the board, that efforts may be made to improve. Where public needs clearly indicate works of public sanitation, which cannot be carried out except by the suffrage of the inhabitants, the future benefit should be more considered than the present cost; for not only are they adding to their own healthfulness, they are insuring to those who come after ample protection, or, at least, the ground work on which more can be done if more is needed. War is a state to be dreaded. All play their part if it has to come and all strive to avoid it if possible. Public interest from the rostrum to the work bench is excited, and everyone does his share to protect the common country from its danger. It is taken as a visitation of the Deity, and the preventing of it is to be looked after by boards of health and doctors. It is an enemy more powerful and more fatal than the greatest nation, but because we must all die the question of entering into a fight with disease is not one to arouse great interest unless the outbreak becomes, or is likely to become, of great magnitude. Then there is a rushing and a fevered effort to do in short order what would not have to be done if all had recognized the importance of the work in their daily routine and kept their own places in such a state as to prevent disease gaining a foothold, or had continually given aid and countenance to the health authorities in their efforts to the same end. "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," is an old saying, and in one sense it must certainly be true, for many are more Godly than clean. By cleanliness alone can disease be successfully kept under, and the people have this matter as much and more in their hands than do the officials.