

is given a carbolic bath and pronounced free from infection, although the danger probably lies not in the skin but in the throat and nasal and aural passages, which often remain full of living germs, and are consequently potential sources of infection. The same is true of diphtheria.

Hence, to be of real efficacy, the ordinary measures for disinfection require very careful revision.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CLEAN DWELLINGS.\*

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IT is, of course, impossible to lay down a hard and fast rule as to what is dangerous or injurious to the health of the inmates in the matter of dirty walls and ceilings of living rooms, but I am becoming more and more convinced that, as far as the sanitary authority is concerned, their chief work for the advancement of the health of the community in places where general sanitation is as far advanced as it is in Guildford, lies in the improvement of the internal conditions of the dwellings. That a real difference exists between the inside air of even a well-ventilated dwelling and that of the outside is shown by the remarkable difference in the effects produced by the two conditions in those suffering from consumption of the lungs—the actual open-air treatment having been proved to be essential for improvement or recovery. There is far too much living indoors even for our changeable climate; but, accepting the habits of the people, we can but do our best to purify the inside air of dwellings, so as to minimize the difference between it and the external air. Now, it is impossible for the air of rooms to be pure if the surfaces with which in its continuous movement it must come into contact are dirty. This "dirt" is mostly decomposing organic matter. The porous surfaces of the rooms retain the condensed exhalations from the breath and bodies of the inmates, accumulated, perhaps, during many years. The working class family lives practically always in the kitchen, so that, taking the average number of persons as five, there may be said to be almost perpetual overcrowding in this living room. Hence the special necessity of keeping this room clean, and thorough renovation every year is in most cases required. The doctrine of pure air inside dwellings is, I feel sure, the one to be preached, but, before it can be fully taken advantage of, the following conditions at least are, in my opinion, necessary:—

- (1) The people must be well and properly fed—for unless sufficient bodily heat is produced, one is susceptible to the action of

cold air—and hence the inlets for fresh air will be kept closed. The matter of proper feeding is, however, only partly a question of economic prosperity, but to a great extent one of proper choice and suitable preparation of food stuffs.

- (2) They must be properly clothed, so that there is no excessive loss of bodily heat. Our chief hope in both these matters appears to be in the education in domestic subjects of the girls' classes in our elementary schools.
- (3) Provision should be made in building by-laws for the permanent ventilation of living rooms without producing draughts. Reliance is now placed on windows and doors for inlets, and, perhaps, a chimney flue for outlet. As, however, foul and heated air rises, the outlet should be at the ceiling level and into the chimney flue, or preferably into a separate flue by the side of the chimney, and the inlets should be by shafts which open into the rooms in an upward direction, so that the air admitted is less likely to be felt as a draught.
- (4) Two-storied back additions to rows of cottages should be prohibited, as they must necessarily diminish the light in the living room, and interfere with the play of sunshine and fresh air around the premises. There are a great many such houses in Guildford, where the window of the living room is almost flush with the wall of the back addition, with the result that the light in the room is very poor, and it is also often interfered with by the addition to the next house.
- (5) For small dwellings it would be very much healthier to have one good sized living room rather than a small kitchen and a small parlour which is rarely used.

SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS.—The Local Government Board for Scotland have made the following appointments to the additional posts which have been created on their staff, namely:—Mr. J. Walker Smith, burgh engineer and master of works, Edinburgh, to be engineering inspector; Dr. Thomas F. Dewar, M.D., C.M., D.Sc., medical officer of health for the counties of Fife and Kinross, to be a medical inspector; Mr. John Wilson to be architectural inspector; Miss Elizabeth M. M'Vail, M.B., Ch.B. Glasgow, D.Ph. Camb., to be lady inspector. Miss M'Vail is a daughter of Dr. M'Vail, medical officer of health for the counties of Stirling and Dumbarton, who was President of the Society of Medical Officers of Health in the session 1900-01.

\* Annual Report, 1909.