

CONDITIONS NEEDED

IMPROVEMENT IN

FOREIGN QUARTER

Dwellings Overcrowded and Very Unsanitary, — Though Disease Rare.

ITALIANS AND POLES ARE WORST

Swedes, Norwegians and the Finns More Civilized — Children Intelligent.

The medical theories in regard to the effect of uncleanly conditions on the spread of diphtheria seem to have received a rude jolt from the fact that there is very little trace of that disease to be found in the foreign quarter here, in spite of the present epidemic. There can be little doubt but that the sanitary conditions there are by no means of the most ideal kind, and it is a matter of surprise and of congratulation to the people of the city that so little disease of any kind is prevalent there.

The general consensus of opinion among the city officials who have to do with this quarter is that the Italians and Polacks are the worst in this regard to sanitary conditions, and the Finns, Swedes and Norwegians are of a much better type and make good citizens. The city engineer's department states that the Swedes and Norwegians show the greatest anxiety to secure good homes, and the houses they build are substantial and permanent structures, and of a very good class. The Finns are also good in this respect, but the other nationalities, including the Italians, the Bulgarians and the Polacks, are mostly very lax in house building, and their dwellings are on the whole of a rather squalid and tumble down character.

The real reason for this lies partially in the fact that the people of Northern European nations come to Canada mostly with the intention of establishing a home here and making this their country, whereas the immigrants from the south of Europe have less idea of permanent residence, and many come here with the intention of making a little money and then going back to the homeland to live in peace and plenty for the rest of their days. Among the Italians particularly is this tendency found, and with them also there is an inclination to go home to Italy for the winter months, and consequently they feel that they do not require dwellings of a very substantial construction.

Among the Italians and Polacks the greatest uncleanliness is also found, and the portion of the city that lies around James street is in many places almost filthy. Not so much James street itself, which is a well built up business thoroughfare, but the streets tributary to it. A great many of the houses are overcrowded, and the provincial law requiring 600 cubic feet of air space for each person has apparently never been heard of there. Accommodation is so scarce as a matter of fact that tales are told of beds being kept warm all day, being used in three eight-hour shifts, and certainly there are a large number of boarding houses where the beds are forced to work double shifts. Not only this, but the houses are built too close together and not enough ground is left around them.

The fact that a sewer has recently been laid on James street ought to help matters, and the officials are of the opinion that the residents should be almost forced to put in connections. As things are at present, a good many of the better class of Italians are moving away from that section and are buying homes elsewhere.

The question of the crowding together of the buildings is one that should be taken up by the city, and a bylaw regulating this should be placed on the statutes, and indeed it is understood that one is now in preparation. Many houses are built back to back, one facing on the street and the other on the lane. The condition now existing can hardly be remedied at once, but the extension of it can be prevented.

The people for the most part live simply and the food is not elaborate, although some wonderful and marvellous concoctions, which are muchly odoriferous, are to be found. The great trouble is that often the people eat, cook, live and sleep in the same apartment. The food to be had on the tables of the Finns is clean and wholesome, and so is that in the homes of the Swedes and Norwegians, who are after all rather further down town.

The children show themselves bright in school, that is those who get the chance to go there. Mr. N. C. Mansell, principal of the King Edward School, which most of the children attend, says that some very bright intellects are to be found among those of every nationality, though perhaps the children of the people from the north of Europe show up the best. It is difficult to judge, though, for it depends largely on the individuals and their home life, and also on the class they come from. Among the Italians particularly there is a very marked caste distinction.

However, after all there are a great many of the children who never go to school. The children do not ap-

pear to have a fair chance among the Italians, and the Poles and the kindred nationalities. In most cases there will be the man and his wife and from four to eight children, as well as perhaps a dozen boarders, and in some cases there are more boarders than that. With such large households the children have, to a large extent, to take a back place.

The children of the Finns, Swedes and Norwegians are well dressed and neat as a rule, but with the others this condition of affairs is the exception. Secretary Reed, of the Children's Aid Society, says that in many cases among these others the children appear to be pretty roughly handled.

"The people do not seem to have learned yet the Anglo-Saxon way of spanking the youngsters," he said, "but they have a pretty reliable substitute."

Many of the residents of the foreign quarter are becoming quite prosperous, however, and the conditions on the whole are gradually improving. Be this as it may, there is still room for bettering them, and strict supervision by the authorities would help things along wonderfully.