

SCIENCE.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1886.

COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

AMERICAN CANNED GOODS are being imported into France so rapidly and in such quantities as to alarm the producers of that country. As a result of this, we shall probably see a revivification of all the instances reported in the daily papers in past years of poisoning from these articles, some of which may have been due to the negligence of those engaged in the canning process, but most of which were undoubtedly due to carelessness or want of thought in the consumer. That the contents of some of the millions of cans annually put up for market in the United States should spoil is not to be wondered at, inasmuch as every housewife has the same experience in her domestic preserving; but in most of the instances where sickness has occurred from the consumption of such goods, the color or the taste gave ample warning.

IT IS DEEPLY TO BE REGRETTED that the work of the summer corps of the New York health department was not carried on this year, as heretofore. The amount of money which was asked of the board of apportionment was \$10,000, the same as in past years; but for some reason, which was undoubtedly satisfactory to that body, although exceedingly unsatisfactory to the general public, the amount was not allowed, and the poor children of the metropolis have suffered accordingly. In 1885 this corps, consisting of 50 physicians, entered 28,178 houses of the tenement class, visited 113,410 families, and actually treated 3,934 cases of sickness which would otherwise have gone through their illness, either to recovery or death, unattended by any physician. Inasmuch as 1,850 of these cases were of a diarrhoeal nature, the probability of a fatal termination in the majority was very great: 291 children were found affected with contagious disease, and the necessary steps to isolate and disinfect were carried out, — a sanitary supervision which would not have been exercised had this corps not been on duty. Besides all this good work, there were distributed 11,579 circulars giving directions to poor and ignorant

mothers as to the care of their infants, and 5,000 tickets distributed, each guaranteeing its holder a day on the water under the refreshing influence of the ocean breezes. That such work as this, affecting as it does the lives of thousands, should be left undone in a great city like New York, where tens of millions are annually spent for the maintenance of the city government, to save a paltry \$10,000, or, what is more likely, to satisfy some personal or political grievance, is little less than criminal. Brooklyn, during the past year, had the services of a volunteer summer corps, and this year has put in the field a paid corps, which is doing excellent service. The action of New York is only paralleled by that of the United States toward the National board of health.

PROFESSOR LEMAISTRE of Limoges describes a new disease which is at the present time quite prevalent among the school-children of France. It is known among the common people as *perlèche*, and is contagious. It consists in an abrasion in the corners of the mouth, which become little ulcers and sometimes bleed: it lasts from two to four weeks. The description given of it corresponds to what is commonly called in this country a 'cold-sore' or 'fever-blister.' In the sore Lemaistre has found a microbe which he calls *Streptococcus plicatilis*. These have been found in drinking-water, and it is surmised that they have been transferred to the lips of a person, thence to the edge of a cup, and thus all who used the cup became affected. Professor Lemaistre has examined the 5,500 children who attend the 32 schools of Limoges, and has found 312, or 1 in 17, affected with this disease. Although Professor Lemaistre is connected with the *Ecole de médecine* of Limoges, his explanation is to be accepted with a good deal of caution. It is hardly probable that a new disease has been discovered, or that its method of propagation can be so easily explained. The difficulties surrounding the demonstration of the connection between microbes and disease are so great, and the men competent to trace the various steps in the process so few, that we shall feel compelled to wait for further evidence before we accept *perlèche* as a new disease, and this variety of *Streptococcus* as its germ.