

THE DAILY EXAMINER.

NOVEMBER 5, 1895.

THE SEWERAGE QUESTION.

The question of sewerage, opportunely raised by Dr. McLeod in the season for discussion and in anticipation of a civic election, may well receive our consideration, if, as the Doctor maintains, the health and lives of citizens of Charlottetown are involved in the issue. It is not, of course, probable that any action will immediately be taken. Twenty years of agitation and many sweeping fires, besides several increases of the rate of its drainage, were necessary to the introduction of our excellent system of water-works; and we must, necessarily, suffer repeated losses by pestilential diseases even our men of property and influence wake up to the importance of sewerage. It is useless to talk about the improvement in the value of property which sewerage would cause, or of the expediency of keeping Charlottetown abreast of the times and in a position to offer inducements to citizens of the better classes to come to live here. Nothing short of absolute calamity will rouse the people of Charlottetown to make an improvement which will require the expenditure of a considerable sum of money. Yet there is, undoubted, by from the ethical point of view, a great deal in Dr. McLeod's plea that the lessening of pestilential disease and consequent saving of human life, is of more importance than the hoarding of money in the banks, or even the contingency of an increase of taxation. But the doctor, in the course of the discussion which followed his paper, pointed out that an arrangement might be arrived at under which we may have sewerage without any practical increase of taxation, in so far as the present generation is concerned. That is to say, the amount assessed for the waterworks debenture sinking fund, capitalized, would give a sufficient sum for the construction of sewerage; and that sum might, in justice, be left for payment by those future generations who will enjoy the advantages accruing from sewerage. We own to a prejudice against debt, even municipal debt. But there is no question that the rate of interest is now low and that money for the construction of a civic improvement for all generations might better be raised now than at some future time when money will be dearer than it is at present. Dr. McLeod's suggestion seems to be reasonable, but we have little hope that it will be adopted.

THE PARK ROADWAY.

The main purpose of the Guardian is, apparently, to convince the public that the Examiner is inconsistent with itself. For this purpose, it has this morning used the "deadly parallel" in respect to the Examiner's remarks concerning the Park roadway. We have no fear whatever that any fair-minded and careful reader will agree with the Guardian. Bearing in mind that the Guardian's quotations are made from articles written at different times, and when information concerning the state of the case was not yet fully disclosed, there is no inconsistency in them, either apparent or implied. From the first we have been in favor of the roadway; from the first we have set forth the importance of action towards that end on the part of the City Council; from the first, and always, we have advised an amicable arrangement rather than a resort to law. Nor is the fact that we, in the first place, approved the submission of the matter to the Bench of Judges for an interpretation of the statute of 1876 at all inconsistent with our subsequent disapproval of the "case" agreed to by the Attorney-General and the Recorder, or of the proposal to appeal that "case" to the Supreme Court of Canada. Nor is anything that the Guardian has quoted, or can quote, from THE EXAMINER inconsistent with the conclusion that if it should prove to be necessary to resort to the courts, proceedings must, in view of the mistake that is now apparent, be taken de novo. The Guardian makes the mistake of supposing that THE EXAMINER ought, because it is in favor of the roadway, to discuss the matter from the point of view of certain members of the City Council, and without regard to all the facts and interests involved. The Guardian must not be permitted to measure other people's corn by its own half bushel. We have only to add as to the proceedings of the City Council meeting held this forenoon, that while the refusal of the Mayor to put a resolution regularly proposed and seconded, is unusual and high-handed, His Worship's suggestion providing for notices of appeal in time and also for a public meeting of citizens, was a reasonable one. Such a suggestion, coming from such a source, ought we think to have been accepted. There can be no question that His Worship's action, even though somewhat arbitrary, will in view of all the circumstances, meet the approval of a majority of the citizens.

—Montreal Witness: The Tailon Government seems to possess the necessary courage to attack the liquor traffic in this province. It declares that "intemperance continues to cause great ravages in the midst of our population," which is quite unusually strong and outspoken language on this subject for a speech from the throne. Legislation to stop the holes gnawed in the license laws by the rats of the traffic is promised, and a more rigorous and efficient enforcement of the laws is declared to be the duty of the Government. The activity just now being shown by the government in harrying some of the filthiest dens in Montreal which our own police have practically protected is an earnest of the genuineness of the latter undertaking.

Try some of those twelve now offered for sale in Beer & Goff's show-window. They are very nice. 21—nov4

SEWERAGE FOR CHARLOTTE-TOWN.

Dr. McLeod's Paper Read Before the Epworth League.

A Few Strong Points Strongly Stated.

Beyond the Literary Department of the Epworth League last evening, the Rev. Mr. Campbell in the chair, Dr. McLeod read an elaborate paper, abounding in the fruits of research and thought, concerning Sanitary Reform. We have been permitted to quote for readers of THE EXAMINER, the concluding pages, which refer immediately and particularly to "blind wells," and the necessity there is in Charlottetown for a system of sewerage. Apart from the brilliant achievements in abating the ravages of cholera, sanitary reform in England alone has, within the last fifty years, reduced the death rate from 32 to 18 per 1,000, yet still it is claimed that 100,000 preventable deaths occur in that country annually! What is this sanitary reform? Let me give you briefly one or two of its methods. First, Vital Statistics. It is claimed, and justly, that the discoveries in astronomy have not a more palpable application to navigation and commerce, or the investigations of chemistry to manufacture, than have the statistics of health and disease to moral regeneration; for until these vital statistics had been secured, the moral progress of a nation could not be awakened, because it could not be informed as to the terrible loss of human life arising from preventable causes. An American commission following in the wake of England urged upon the government the necessity of securing such statistics, and called their attention to the extraordinary circumstance that there had already been applied such valuable reports made on insects, the ventilators, on fishes, reptiles and birds, and one on trees and shrubs, and they claim that it would be only reasonable to suppose that man was entitled to consideration equal to either of these subjects. A Canadian commission has endeavored to raise its voice and compel public attention to the urgent necessity of vital and sanitary statistics for this Dominion of ours, for such, I feel ashamed to say, we have none, and in this regard we have failed to put ourselves in line with modern civilization, and with the very first requirements of sanitary science. It is the Federal Government secured necessary statistics for a few of the larger cities, Charlottetown included, for a short period. But they have discontinued these, whether because they feared they were encroaching upon the rights of the Provincial Government, or because of the great expense involved, I am not prepared to say. The loss of our population by the exodus is being deplored by all parties. Immigration, the hobby of the politicians, is encouraged by the Federal Government at a large expenditure of money. But the prevention of the loss of population by death—that is, by a disease which returns—viewed at even from the low estimate made by the Federal Government, is an inexplicable folly and short-sighted policy on the part of any government.

A second great factor in reducing the death rate and improving the public health has been the modern system of sewerage. The reduction of the rate of mortality through this means is remarkable as the following statistics, out of many which I might give, amply show. In Newcastle before the construction of sewerage the death rate was 27 per 1,000; after the introduction of sewerage it was reduced to 21.7 per 1,000. In other 12 towns in England, which I need not here enumerate, the mean death rate before the construction of sewerage was 25.4 per 1,000, after the introduction of sewerage it was reduced to 21.7 per 1,000. At the recent Sanitary Congress at Vienna some remarkable results of the effects of sewerage of certain German towns were given, which are very striking. At Munich, the enteric fever mortality per 10,000 of inhabitants for quinquennial periods was as follows:

Table with 2 columns: Year/Period and Mortality Rate. Rows include 1851 to 1853, 1854 to 1859, 1860 to 1865, 1866 to 1871, 1872 to 1874, 1875 to 1880, 1881 to 1886, 1887 to 1892, 1893 to 1898, 1899 to 1904.

At Dantzig the figures present some most remarkable characteristics; the deaths from enteric fever per 100,000 living were as follows: In 1855 to 1869, when there was no sewerage and no proper water supply, 108; 1871 to 1875, after the introduction of water supply, 100; 1876 to 1880, after the introduction of sewerage, 18; In Hamburg the deaths from typhoid fever per 1,000 of total deaths were: From 1838 to 1844, before the commencement of sewerage works, 45.5; From 1871 to 1880, after the completion of sewerage, 13.3; During the time the works were in progress, viz., from 1872 to 1874, the mortality from typhoid fever per 10,000 living was: In the unsewered districts, 40.9; In the districts for the most part sewerage, 32.6; And in the fully sewerage districts, 26.0. These figures give a fair index of the reduction of mortality the world over, wherever sewerage has been introduced. Charlottetown has no sewers. Is its condition such as to make it an exception to the universal experience? or has it found a safe and suitable substitute in its blind wells? These are made to receive organic waste and to transmit it, without any change, into our ground water. There the loose gravel acts as a filter, allowing the water to gravitate slowly to sea, river or spring as the case may be, retaining the organic matter in its meshes. Now, science has proven that not a particle of dead organic matter can ever return to the living world again—its sure and inevitable destiny—until it is acted upon by mould fungi or other kindred microscopic plants, which are thus a part in the circle of life; for nature moves in a circle. Animals feed on each other and on vegetables, and vegetables feed on dead bodies and vegetables, i.e., on dead organic matter. The nature of these microbes, mould fungi, &c., depend on certain conditions, among others that of more or less moisture. Where moisture is in excess of 33 per cent, the microbes are harmless to human life; cease to act, and in lieu of them we have bacteria and other forms of microbes whose products are put

refraction and those latter are all dangerous to life. You can then easily understand that the only change possible in the ground water is a putrefactive one and dangerous to life, owing to the presence there of excessive moisture. But admitting this to be true, you will say, "that ground water is so deep down that we cannot possibly be in any danger from it, if it be ever so much fouled, and if it be ever so full of dangerous bacteria." Now let me tell you something about this ground water. It rises and falls, has an upward and downward movement, like the sides of a huge monster breathing, and when it rises it forces out of the soil the air which is contained in its pores down to the surface of water. As the water rises the air is breathed out, as the water line falls the air is pushed down after it. Now what do you say? Is it of any consequence whether the air which the earth breathes out is pure or not? But you may say again, "The air may be occasionally breathed out of the earth, but as there is a thick layer of good sweet earth (which from constant surface evaporation it is not—but admitting for argument's sake that it is so) overlying your poisonous gases and bacteria the friendly mould fungi and other microbes favorable to human life, which can be found with organic matter in the surface of the ground will attack your monsters from below, that is to say will change putrefactive products into harmless products and thus save us from any danger. Are you sure? For when the ground water heaves up its sides and breathes out the air, that is the very time when the earth is sodden with moisture in excess of 33 per cent, and I have told you no beneficial change in dead organic matter can take place under such conditions. This is necessarily a very brief and imperfect presentation of this subject, for it would not be a suitable time to get into upon a scientific discussion of it here. I would simply say that science bears me out in affirming that we are making a mad mistake by poisoning the soil and water under our feet, and that if we do not remedy our present state of affairs we will appear in due time the laws of nature are inexorable and those who enter into a contest with her are sure to be worsted in the end. "If we fight nature we court calamity." We may for a period be apparently successful, but in the end she will assert her eternal sway and crushing defeat will be our lot. The inevitable destiny of all putrefactive organic matter is to become food for vegetable life. We may dig deep into the ground and, contrary to nature's plan, throw our decaying organic matter there, and vainly think that there, out of sight and out of mind, it will trouble us no more for ever. We have not destroyed it. Let us fear it! Let us or be left to our children as the deadly legacy of our folly. The blind and utterly to be condemned, sewerage works here also cause a reduction of the death rate from typhoid fever consumption and other diseases. That is to say, deaths occur annually in our midst, which could be averted by the expenditure of some money. Allowing the issues of life and death to hinge on the pocket argument would the saving of those lives compensate us for the outlay? But we are not at all prepared to be able to give human life merely from its economic value. The sphere of the affection, among the noblest and best of our kind transcends money considerations. And when these affections which constitute the sum of human happiness are injured and outraged by the untimely and preventable death of the object of one's love. Be that object father, mother, or son or daughter, the sufferer is surely some excuse if he curses the ethical and intelligent insensibility of the community through whose apathy and indifference, if not avarice, the great bereavement has befallen. Culture belongs to the individual, but civilization and what it entails we have in common. The more highly civilized and moral a man is the more readily will he own his responsibility to the community in which he lives, and the more keenly will he realize that the death of any one traceable to sanitary neglect on the part of the public is nothing short of potential murder.

After the paper a short discussion ensued in which Dr. H. D. Johnson, Mr. F. G. Beer, Mr. W. L. Cotton, Mr. Newson, Rev. Mr. Emery, Mr. W. C. Harris, jr., and other gentlemen raised several points and asked questions which were dealt with by Dr. McLeod in a cogent and interesting speech. The chairman conveyed to Dr. McLeod the unanimous thanks of the audience.

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The report of the United States commission of interstate commerce gives some striking figures as to the state of railway business across the line in 1894. In June of that year 192 railways, representing one-fifth of the total railway capital of the country, were in the hands of receivers. The yearly revenue fell off by \$147,990,077, and expenses were cut down by \$86,556,577, leaving a diminution in net revenue of over fifty million dollars. Within the next five months 9,000 employees were dismissed, a decrease of about 11 per cent. The construction and equipment departments were almost at a standstill, passenger and freight traffic fell off, and the surplus of previous years was drawn upon for dividends to the amount of \$45,841,354. The New York Financial Chronicle is of opinion that the year ending June last will show equally marked depression, but that with the current year a change for the better has begun. The expectation is justified by the circumstances, and it is to be hoped that the Canadian rails, which succeeded in escaping the disasters so common across the line, will have a full share in the tide of prosperity now owing throughout the continent.

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