

Now what do we do with this filth? The custom in most towns has been to use it to fill up low places in streets and sidewalks in the suburbs, and low ground elsewhere. It is absolutely necessary that stringent regulations should be made and carried out under which street sweepings should not be deposited on roadways or sidewalks to make a wearing surface. On the roadway, passing wheels fling its fine particles into the face of pedestrians and from the sidewalk it is carried on hundreds of boots into the home. It should be used at finished grade only for the boulevard part of the sidewalk and should be covered with a thin coat of good soil and sown or sodded as soon as possible after it is deposited. On the travelled part of the road or sidewalk it should never be deposited except to fill up below grade and then only when it can be covered with good clean material. In all towns there are streets which require thousands of loads to fill them up to passable condition. Thousands more may be disposed of on the town property and when such town places of deposit are exhausted there are many private properties on which there is low ground to be filled up.

The deposits removed from the catchpits should be used exclusively for the redemption of waste land, but no such disposal of catchpit or street cleanings should be permitted except by permit from the local health authority. A record should be kept of such dumping grounds. The date and character of the deposit should be recorded and no permit should be given for the erection of a building on such made ground until the health authorities are satisfied that nature has rendered the foul matter harmless.

In Halifax for some years the ashes collected by the city scavengers have been used to fill up low places in streets and sidewalks. Recently nearly all such available material has been utilized for sidewalk repairs except that in the summer it is used as a frost cushion under concrete sidewalks. During the past year the City Health Board has protested against this practice, on the ground that outbreaks of such diseases as scarlet fever and diphtheria have been caused by it. Whether or not their contention is correct, I am not prepared to express an opinion to-day, but it cannot be denied that the danger is possible.

It is claimed that householders empty sweepings into the ashpan and not into the stove. Although this is done in violation of the regulations of the Health Board, it is by no means an easy matter to prevent it. Frequently the kitchen maid finds it much more convenient to empty the dustpan into the ashes than to remove for that purpose the pots and kettles that cover the fire. The dust and dirt particles which may include the scarlet fever carrier, pass under the scavenger's eye without detection and consequently the regulation prohibiting the removal of ashes mixed with any other matters fails to protect.

Another objection urged is that householders expectorate in the ashes. I must confess that I have not been convinced that this practice is so dangerous as the deposit of sweepings, yet while there is any danger it should not be defended. It is not desirable to encourage such a custom, yet next to the fire, the best spittoon for any householder who cannot afford a cuspidor, is the ashes.

By the time the ashes are turned out of the pan into the barrel, turned out of the barrel into the cart and turned out of the cart on the place of deposit, the sputum is well covered with ashes and is not such a menace to health as it is when deposited on the dry impervious pavements where it can dry up and blown about. The ashes contain carbon, charcoal and recalcined lime which are deodorants and disinfectants. It is doubtful, however, if the natural process of humification becomes active in ashes as soon as deposited.

The natural soil is primarily derived from the subsoil which may itself be regarded as the weathered portion of the underlying soft or hard strata. Science has taught us that the upper layers of the soil are teeming with forms of organic life whose hunger is inexhaustible and whose power of absorption is so active that anything that is even thrown on the surface of the ground speedily disappears, and whether animal or vegetable, becomes humified and so incorporated with the soil as to become actually indistinguishable from it.

In time the objectionable matter in the ashes would undoubtedly be reconstituted into harmless mould by the action of micro-organisms and earth worms. The doubt, however, respecting what may happen in the meantime, prohibits us from defending the general use of such ashes in repairing sidewalks in the neighborhood of residences. "Separation of ashes from all other refuse under whatever system of collection, is always more or less imperfect and incomplete. Some house or store dirt will find its way into the receptacle intended only for ashes, and house dirt is peculiarly exposed to infection and is doubtless often really infected dirt. Hence it follows that not even ashes can be regarded as certainly free from infection, while garbage must be recognized as peculiarly exposed to it. There is one class of ashes which is so little exposed to infection as to belong in a group by itself, and that is the ashes from factories and other large establishments into which food does not enter.

It would be safer to dispose of the house ashes in the same manner as suggested for street sweepings and the same precautions should be taken by the health authorities respecting buildings on such deposits.

The best method of disposing of the house garbage cannot be determined so readily. A brief statement of the problem with an outline of general methods adopted for its solution may be of timely interest.

In Minneapolis the citizens are required to drain off all moisture from garbage and to wrap the solid in paper before putting it in the garbage barrel or can. If the collector reports to the scavenging department that the garbage is not properly drained and wrapped in paper no further service is rendered until the rule is complied with. If the householder then fails to care properly for his garbage or have it cleaned up, he is brought into court and fined.

It is claimed that the drained garbage will neither smell badly in hot weather nor freeze and stick to the can in cold weather.

Under existing conditions in almost every town, the can or the barrel is frequently a greater nuisance than the garbage itself. In primitive days, the Indian when the offence from the waste product of his house-keeping became too noisome, moved away, but in our day and generation we remove the garbage and keep the odor. With the presence of heat, moisture and flies, garbage very soon becomes a foul, maggoty, fly-breeding mass of putrefaction.

In the humble opinion of the writer, the Minneapolis regulation is admirable, although it may be a half measure only. A by-law requiring the draining of garbage is a good regulation but only half as good as it would be if it provided for burning in the kitchen fire after draining.

At a house in Halifax, which I visit frequently, although it has been occupied for over a dozen years, not one ounce of kitchen garbage has been removed from the premises by the city. All garbage and other combustible refuse is burned in the kitchen stove, the burning being carried out when there is a good bright fire. A removable strainer basket is kept in the corner of the kitchen sink. It costs 50c. and will last for years.

Peelings, the scrapings of plates from the table, porridge, soup or vegetable pots, pans, &c., leaves from the teapot, sol-