

## COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION IN THE COUNTRY.

Among other matters discussed at the meeting of the National Social Science Association held in Dublin last month, was the drainage of towns, and the proper application of the sewage to increase the wealth and agricultural produce of the country. The subject was introduced by Lord Talbot de Malahide, who presided over the department of public health. His lordship observed that "he would be ashamed of England's distinguished civil engineers if they did not solve this difficult question in our time." And yet it is emphatically the *questio vexata* of the age. We all feel the importance not only of securing efficient town drainage, but also of turning the sewage to a profitable account as a fertilizer of our soils. Its value as such is well known, and the subject has been very thoroughly ventilated—thanks to Mr. Alderman Mechi, among others: but hitherto engineers and chemists are alike puzzled to find out how it is to be done. The man who is to do it is only "the coming man" as yet. In Montreal the want of proper drainage and sewerage is terribly felt; but those who ought to move in the matter continue to fold their hands. There can be little doubt that, with care and precaution, the revenue that might be derived from disposing of the contents of good public sewers, would in a few years pay the cost of constructing them. But, so far as Montreal is concerned, it looks as if it would be reserved for the next generation to begin and finish any improvement of the kind.

There was another subject of much interest to which his lordship also referred. We mean the improvement of the dwellings of farm labourers. His lordship said:

"The amelioration of the dwellings of the town and country population belongs more to social economy, but, as it has attracted so much attention in our section, it may be well to give a short statement of the steps which are being taken in this country to improve their construction and sanitary condition. Sir William Somerville has exerted himself to obtain two acts of parliament for carrying out this object, particularly in the case of settled and incumbered estates. His last act, for obtaining loans from the Exchequer Commissioners for this purpose, places the superintendence of these erections under the Board of Works, who have lately framed some excellent plans and estimates. These measures were necessary for the purpose of clearing away some of the great difficulties which beset the question. Of course the state of the peasantry, although much im-

proved within the last ten years by the joint influence of emigration and higher wages, is far from satisfactory; but it varies in different parts of the country. The Royal Agricultural Society of Ireland has offered four gold medals for the erection of the greatest number of newly built labourers' cottages within each province, the same number of gold medals for improved cottages in each province; a gold medal for the greatest number of newly-erected cottages in each county, a silver medal for the greatest number of newly-erected cottages within the district of each local society, and one for the greatest number of improved cottages within each local society. Besides this, there is the Leinster Challenge Cup for the person who shall have erected during the year the greatest number of approved labourers' cottages in any part of Ireland. The conditions for the erection of new cottages in most respects follow the requirements of Sir Wm. Somerville's acts. It cannot be said that our Royal Agricultural Society has, in this respect, been behind the spirit of the age. In erecting cottages there are many points which require consideration. 1. They must not be too expensive; for, in so great a work it is advisable to make the outlay as nearly reproductive as possible, and unless this is done it will not be in the power of a large number of landowners, however well disposed, to co-operate as they would wish. 2. They must not be too large. If they are so, instead of improving the condition of the inmates, you tempt them to take in lodgers, and make them over-crowded. For a married couple, without children, two rooms are sufficient, with the necessary offices. If they have children of both sexes, three are absolutely necessary. 3. They should have all, where it is practicable, a garden, not a large one, or more than a rood. This will enable them to be self-supporting, and be a great source of comfort to the inhabitants. I believe that most influential landowners in Ireland are doing something in the way of improvement. Lords Digby, Clermont, and Bath have led the way, but it must be some years before we can put ourselves on a level with our fellow-countrymen of Great Britain. With the erection of some respectable dwellings, sanitary measures must go hand-in-hand, and I have no doubt that visiting committees, if they steer clear of proselytism, will be able to work extensive good; above all, if the clergy of all denominations enter warmly into the good work the benefit will be rapid and incalculable."

Lord Talbot's definition of what labourers' cottages ought to be, should be taken as the rule by all who contemplate carrying on this important improvement; for it has not unfrequently happened that promising schemes have been nipped in the bud, simply from the expense—the needless expense—which has attended the erection of new dwellings of this class. In this country where timber is so abundant, and where new settlers are compelled to cut it down, most comfortable and sufficiently roomy