

DISPOSAL OF SEWAGE IN CANADIAN TOWNS.

THE time is at length come when towns in Canada which pour their sewage into the nearest stream are liable to get into legal difficulties. It is a pity that the time had not come long ago. London is in difficulty from so disposing of its sewage. Action for preventing the fouling of Ontario streams had to be commenced somewhere. Why not in London? If London is exceptional now in this regard, it will, in all probability, not be long so. Other small towns, it appears, are threatened; and Montreal may not long tolerate the sewage of Ottawa. We have been consulted in a number of instances by interested persons in the smaller towns relative to the best manner of sewage disposal, in order to avoid nuisances. We have long, indeed always, protested against the vile practice of turning the sewage of one town in a direct course to what is or may probably soon be the water supply of a neighbouring town, and insisted that such a practice could not possibly be long continued. Long ago there should have been legislation—legislation put into practice—for preventing this murderous way of disposing of excrement, which has already, without any doubt, cost in Canada thousands upon thousands of human lives.

What is to be done? It has been suggested that the Ontario Government appoint a commission to investigate, consider and report upon the best means of sewage disposal for the various cities and towns of the Province. Had not a great deal been done already—vast sums of money expended, in England with a like view, as relating to that country, reports of all of which have been made public, and from which all interested may fairly benefit, this suggestion would be a good one; but as it is, we cannot see what could be gained by such a course, with the reports of such investigations in England before us.

Towns must not expect to get rid of their excrement, even after it has collected at the mouths of the sewers, in such an easy manner as that of simply dumping

it into the nearest stream of water, regardless of the comfort and health of their neighbours. People will congregate together in large communities, and they must expect to pay for having the refuse of their bodies and households safely disposed of after it has been collected either by a water carriage, or any other system, so that it shall not be in any way or degree a nuisance to others—to neighbouring communities.

Individuals and communities must be taught in the most impressive manner that such refuse is *not* disposed of when it has been deposited in the back yard, in a cesspool or in a stream of water, or even in a lake, and that as taxpayers they must incur some outlay for the further treatment or destruction of it.

There are two special points to be constantly borne in mind in relation to sewage: one, that the sewage—all waste, used up matters of every sort—in the interests of health and life if not of comfort, must be safely or properly disposed of—indeed, destroyed; the other, that to so dispose of it there must be, at the present time, with only our present knowledge, some special outlay of money by all ratepayers for the purpose. The first point is at last becoming evident to everybody. The chief difficulty is now as to the best and most economical manner of treating or destroying the sewage. There certainly should be some special authority which should advise with and guide the various towns in the different provinces in this regard. The second point must be calmly thought over and squarely faced. However the sewage may be disposed of, the proper disposal will involve some outlay upon the people. Even a sewage farm in the most favorable circumstances will hardly yet, with our present knowledge, pay all expenses of working it. And this is probably the best and most profitable or economical way of treating sewage. Elsewhere we have discussed the subject at greater length.