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Questions and Answers. Miscellaneous.

A Bad Well.

Have a good brick well which has been down nearly twenty years. Always extra good water till two years ago. It went bad, but we have cleaned it often. Have cleaned it three times in two years, but it always fills in and is as bad as ever. There is no drain to let the water in. It just filters in through the clay. It has a hard cement bottom, and we wash it all out as clean as a plate, and still it is bad. Is there any way to have the water in it keep good, or must we put down a new well? If so, must we get new brick?

1. Are there any chemicals we can get to put in the well to cleanse it?
2. Is lime good to put in?
3. If lime is good, how much will it need for a well twelve feet deep, six feet across?

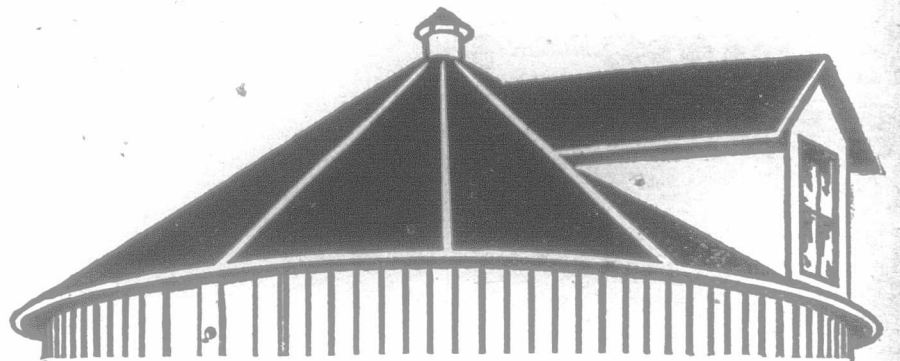
Ans.—The explanation of this undesirable condition lies, no doubt, in that the channels through which the water comes to the well have become contaminated with decaying vegetable or animal matter. When the wall was first put down the soil acted as a filter, but the interspaces have now become filled, and so long as the well is in that position without the sources of contamination removed, it will be useless to try to sterilize the water so it will be fit to use. Perhaps the sources of contamination might be discovered and removed, but if the land is sloping from all directions towards the well, it will be hard to remedy this condition. A bored well, or drilled well, is preferable, but if you decide to put down a new dug well, we can see no objection to using the same bricks, provided they are thoroughly cleansed.

Ordinary lime will not be a satisfactory disinfectant. Chloride of lime or bleaching powder, which may be obtained from any druggist, is commonly used to disinfect water for domestic use. Following is a list of instructions how this chemical may be used to purify small quantities of water. It is taken from the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps, and will serve the purpose only where small quantities are to be sterilized:

1. Take a teaspoonful of chloride of lime containing about one-third available chlorine, and remove the excess of powder by rolling a pencil or other round object along the top of the spoon, or by flattening it with a penknife blade, so that the excess will be squeezed off.
2. Dissolve the teaspoonful of chloride of lime in a cupful of water, making sure that all lumps are thoroughly broken up, and to it, in any convenient receptacle, add three more cupfuls of water.
3. Stir up the mixture, allow to stand for a few seconds in order to let any particles settle (this stock solution, if kept in a tightly-stoppered bottle, may be used for four or five days), and add one teaspoonful of this milky stock solution to two gallons of the water to be purified in a pail or other receptacle. Stir thoroughly, in order that the weak chlorine solution will come into contact with all of the bacteria, and allow to stand for ten minutes. This will give, approximately, one-half part of free chlorine to a million parts of water, and will effectually destroy all typhoid and colon bacilli, or other dysentery-producing bacilli in the water. The water will be without taste or odor, and the trace of free chlorine added rapidly disappears.

This method is equally applicable to the sterilization of water drawn from a farm well, and it may also be used to sterilize wells which have been infected, provided, of course, that the source of the infection has been removed. It would obviously be futile to sterilize a well situated in a farmyard from which organic matter and bacteria are constantly draining into the well.

It will hardly be sufficient to sterilize the well unless you remove the sources of contamination, but in case you would like to sterilize the whole well, you could do so by mixing up about one-third of an ounce of chloride of lime in a small quantity of water and stir it into the water of the well.



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