

Sanitary Items.

POISONED AIR IN DWELLINGS.

An exchange says: "A scientific man who takes great interest in the subject of drainage, holds that 'two-thirds of the miasmatic troubles in New York proceed from the kitchen sinks of the city houses. The sink-drain gets clogged with grease, and foul odors arise to the upper stories of the houses, and little pale children inhale them all night, until they have scarcely strength enough in the morning to put on their shoes and stockings.' For want of a better remedy, says the *New York Sun*, a common brick placed over the aperture will nearly obviate the trouble, and it should be the duty of every sensible head of a family to see that it is regularly placed there. A woman says that is a man's idea. The duty of every head of a family is to see that the sink is kept clean and free from grease, and that from the drain no foul odors can be thrown back into the house to poison its atmosphere. This is very easily done by a plentiful use of washing-soda to kill the grease and keep the pipes free from it, and the occasional use of chloride of lime to sweeten the drain. The cost is but little, and the enemy is cleared out instead of being bottled up, according to the *Sun's* advice. Keep your sink clean and the pipes free from dirt, then clap on your brick if you want to."

To this we add that there is no necessity that the children, or anyone else in the house, should inhale such foul air all night; let them sleep with the windows open more or less, in proportion to the strength of the wind, and thus give admission to the outside air, shutting off the inside air of the house from their bedrooms, if necessary, and the health of the family will not entirely depend on a kitchen sink.

PAINTING WALLS - SEASONABLE HINTS.

Of course, says the *American Builder*, everybody knows, or ought to know, that walls and ceilings are finished with plaster. But everybody may not be aware that plaster has the property of absorbing moisture. This, perhaps, will not take place in rooms where a fire is kept steadily; but in rooms left, as is often the case, for weeks without a fire, the walls will take up a considerable quantity of damp. The effect will be injurious to the health of the inmates. There are few persons who have not suffered from a mysterious cold, caught they know not how, though, perhaps, damp in the plaster had something to do with it.

The extent to which damp is absorbed in a plastered wall may be discovered by noticing what so often takes place in rooms where the walls are painted and have become chilled by a season of cold weather. As soon as the temperature becomes warmer the atmosphere is condensed on the walls, and at times in such quantities as to run off in streams. Now, had it not been for the paint, the greater portion of this moisture would have been absorbed by the plastered walls. And as a consequence the quality of the plaster would have been impaired and the room made unwholesome. In view of this effect in plastered walls, it becomes a question well worth considering, whether, in finishing a house, the walls should be papered or painted. If paint is decided on, it is highly necessary that the painting be properly done and good materials employed.

DRAINAGE.

The State Board of Health of Massachusetts has lately made public the following useful information:—

Local boards of health are reminded that, at this time of the year particularly, special attention is required to secure cleanliness about dwellings and throughout towns.

No decaying matter should be allowed in cellars. On the contrary, they should be kept sweet and clean, and as much exposed to fresh air and sunlight as possible. They should also be made dry, by draining if necessary. It should be remembered that the air of houses is supplied largely from cellars; so that the common practice of storing all sorts of rubbish there should be condemned. If the air of the cellar is impure, it often gives rise to various ailments in the persons breathing it in the rooms above; and not seldom becomes one predisposing cause of such diseases as typhoid fever, diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera infantum, diphtheria, scarlet fever, sore throats, and numberless conditions of ill-health which cannot be described under any particular name. If the air in the cellar is damp, neuralgia, rheumatism,

and affections of the lungs and other respiratory organs are very apt to follow.

The air supplied to furnaces should never be from cellars, but from the outside atmosphere, and, if possible, on the sunny side of the building. This is a very important matter in schools, where there would generally be no difficulty in following the best methods. The air supply should never be drawn from shady back yards, or the vicinity of privies, sink-spouts, etc.

If kept clean ashes may be used to advantage in filling up low spots of land, making paths, etc.

Garbage should never be allowed to accumulate; all that is not fed to fowls or animals on the place should be kept in tight receptacles, and carried away frequently. Pig-pens should not be permitted in thickly settled places.

There should be no soakage into the ground near wells or houses permitted from stables and barns. It will often be found economical to save all the manure, liquid and solid, by receiving it in water-tight vessels, etc., or mixing it with loam, under cover, and frequently carting it away.

Chamber slops, and slopwater generally, should never be thrown on the ground near houses. They may be placed directly on the soil of gardens, etc., or pumped up from water-tight cesspools, or be used by distribution under the surface of the soil, in the manner described on p. 334 of the "Seventh Annual Report of the State Board of Health," and now introduced in the town of *Lenox, Mass.* The chamber slops alone can be easily disposed of by mixing them with ashes or loam, as at the *Pittsfield Hospital*, by the method shown on p. 87 of the "Annual Report of the State Board of Health." If the kitchen slops are discharged directly into a cesspool, care should be taken that the pipes do not get clogged with grease.

Earth closets serve a good purpose, particularly for sick people and invalids, if carefully attended to, and if well dried loam be used for them in sufficient quantity; they are more easily managed if liquid refuse be kept out of them.

The ordinary privy should be abolished. It is dangerous on two grounds: 1st. It must be so far from the dwelling as to seriously expose children, particularly during bad weather. 2nd. It corrupts the air, the soil, and consequently too often the wells. Instead of the common privy-vault, which is not safe even if cemented, it is best to use under the seat some receptacle which can be frequently removed and emptied. Galvanized iron tubs, barrels sawn through the middle, etc., answer the purpose very well. If kept thoroughly disinfected with dry earth or ashes, they can be near houses, connected by passageways, and will not corrupt the wells.

If water closets are used, and there are no sewers, the best disposal of the sewage is by the flush-tank, and irrigation under the surface of the soil, as described on p. 135 of the "Eighth Annual Report of the State Board of Health." If cesspools must be used, they should be tight, and often emptied by the odorless process, or else have their contents pumped out on the surface of the ground for fertilizing purposes, where that can be done without causing a nuisance. If the sewage is placed on the soil in the morning of a dry, clear day, when the sun is shining, and in places where it may be readily absorbed by the earth, the odors from it are the least offensive. In very loose soil, and remote from dwellings, ordinary loose walled cesspools may be used without danger for a short time; but even then the custom cannot be approved.

The evils arising from want of attention to the suggestions briefly given above are many, and undoubtedly much ill-health can be thus explained. Good water, from deep wells, is much better than rain water, which is soft, and does not contain the lime, etc., so beneficial to health. If the wells and springs are kept free from contamination, as they may be with some care, until houses and streets become placed closely together, the water furnished by them is of the very best quality. A few illustrations of the baneful effects, when contaminated, are given.

A clergyman living in one of our towns reports as follows:

"About a year ago my son, thirteen years old, was taken sick with diphtheria. It was quite a severe case, and was very obstinate, resisting, day after day, all treatment; medicines did not have their usual effect. By and by we thought of the water (which was found upon chemical examination to be polluted with organic matter like that found in drains and cesspools). We immediately stopped using the water, concluding that the impure water was the probable cause of the boy's sickness, and the probable reason why the medicines would not work; for they had been mixed in this water, and he had used it for a gargle.

"With change of water, the sick boy at once began to mend, and was soon about the house again. This was the third case of diphtheria in our family within the space of some two years,