

PRIVY-VAULTS.

In Professor Pepper's System of Medicine, now being published by Lea Brothers & Co., is an article upon Drainage and Sewerage by George E. Waring, jr., the accomplished engineer of sanitary drainage, at Newport, R.I. The following extract will be of interest, showing his opinion of privy-vaults.

"Privy-vaults are the sole reliance for the disposal of fecal matter, and often of chamber slops, of 95 per cent. of the population of this country and of Europe as well. It is curious in examining the recommendations of public health officers and the requirements of local boards of health, to observe the uniformity with which this most important subject is passed over, with the prescription that the vault shall be tight, sometimes that it shall be vaulted over, and sometimes that it shall not be within a certain small number of feet of a boundary line, or of a drinking-water well. These prescriptions are most absurd. It is safe to say that of the millions of privy-vaults in this country, not more than hundreds are really tight; that a still smaller number are so vaulted over as to prevent the free exhalation of the gases of decomposition; that those which are so vaulted over are in all respects of worse sanitary effect than those which have freer communication with the air, and that their possibilities of evil reach many times farther than the limits of distance usually required to intervene between them and the well or the neighboring property. In view of the universality of their use and of the completeness with which modern communities are inured to their presence, it seems almost hopeless to attempt to secure a proper realization of their great defects. They are always the seat of the foulest and even of the most dangerous decomposition. They taint not only the air and the soil, but the water of the soil which goes so often to feed our sources of drinking water and their local stench is of itself sufficient to sicken all who have not, by daily and lifelong habit, become accustomed to it. Taking the country at large, farmhouses and village houses, as well as the dwellings of cities, it is not too much to say that the best sanitary service that can be rendered by those interested in the removal of causes of ill-health would be in securing the abolition of those barbarous domestic appliances. In many ways the cesspool is as bad as the vault,

but in some respects the vault is *facile princeps* as a public and private nuisance of the most annoying and dangerous character. Wherever a public or private sewer is available, wherever disposal by irrigation is possible, and wherever even the crudest attention can be secured for an automatic or simpler earth-closet, the strongest effort should be directed to the absolute inhibition of the common privy-vault."

In another connection Mr. Waring refers to these nuisances as "*the fiendish privy-vaults* which prevail so generally." Such strong language, from a man so well qualified to speak with authority, should compel the attention of our local Board. We earnestly commend this important matter to their consideration.

The London *Engineering Times* says that: "Cholera, if it comes to us next summer, will be a good test for our sanitarians and our sanitary science. If the dread disease comes it will be curious to watch its effects upon our sanitary associations and boards of health. The health officers who are medical men may be depended upon to do their duty, as they are always ready to do in any emergency. The *Sanitary News* points out that it only needs time to show what those boards of health which are composed of non-professional men will do for their cities, in the line of intelligent prevention and courageous hopefulness. There will be much fright, nervousness, and foolishness on the part of the population. Whether the preventive work of our sanitarians can overcome the effects of it all is a question to be answered next winter."

SEWAGE FUEL.

Dr. C. H. Vonklein, of Dayton, O., has invented a chemical process which he claims will disinfect sewage matter and turn it into a useful fuel. Different chemical salts are used, the most expensive being nitrate of silver. The doctor states that two dollars' worth of such fuel is equal in heat-giving properties to a ton of coal. It is made into brick-like pieces, without odor, and gives out a strong blaze. As the Doctor will not patent his process here is a chance for our local boards of health to furnish cheap fuel to the poor.