

EVENING NEWS.

Monday, July 10, 1876.

the air of a district. Well, there is some evidence to the contrary at Croxton, where the sewage is carried into the sewer or the land. Indeed, the sewage has no time to purify and become deleterious to health, for it is constantly on the move, or being absorbed in Nature's great laboratory; and the luxuriance of the banks of the stream act as a perfect desolator of the unhealthy gases. The process has been long enough in operation to show its effects, and it is noticeable that an orphan school on the very border of the farm lands of the very healthiest institutions of the kind in Europe, has been built there. And itself the rapid increase of its population testifies to the absence of any general fear. The birth-rate of Beddington in 1872 was 38.65, and the death-rate 14.4.

These foregoing observations have been occasioned by a visit paid to the farm on Saturday last by about fifteen gentlemen interested in the subject, which is rapidly taking place among the vital questions of the day. Among the visitors were Earl Portzamparc, a sanitary reformer of a quarter of a century's standing; Mr. Henry Lee, the well-known naturalist, who, as the author of "Living and Dying," has a decided interest in all that concerns the welfare of our streams; and Mr. McLagan, the member for Llantwit-le-Street, who is so well entitled to represent the agriculturist's side of the subject. The sharpers contumaciously instructed the party in every detail of the process and procedure, and entertained them at a luncheon which everything but the champagne was the direct product of sewage irrigation. The bread was from sewage wheat, the butcher had been fed on sewage meadows, the vegetables were from sewage plots; and to crown all, there were some excellent trout taken from the Wandle at the point where the effluent water of the farm mixes with that beautiful stream. The guests, whose appetites had been whetted by the sharpers' talk, and the food, seemed to have no compunctions about the source of the edibles, and the writer of this, as one who enjoyed the feast, can testify that after two days he exhibits no symptoms of poisoning or indigestion as the results of it.—*Glasgow Herald*, June 19.

The Beddington Farm consists of about 500 acres of land originally very fertile, but little adapted, from the porous character of the soil, to the purposes of sewage irrigation. It is divided into half-a-dozen or more fields, each field which can be irrigated separately, and with comparatively little manual labor on the part of the farmers. The district draining into this area may be estimated as containing a population of 60,000 souls. All the sewers connect with a main drain leading to a filter-house. The distance apart from the filter-house to the strainers is in each case about 100 yards. The strainers may be roughly stated as a kind of mill wheel, turned by the sewage itself, and the revolutions of which serve to remove all hard extraneous matter, and to free the valuable portions of the sewage in the form of sludge liquid, which is collected at the works, and, mixed with ashes, is sold to farmers and market gardeners—at 2s. 6d. per yard. The liquid sewage when leaves the strainer passes directly into an open sewer to the farm, where it is diverted as to enclose each of the fields. The sewer is not exactly on level with the fields, for that would lead to involuntary overflows, particularly when there is much storm water; but sluices are fixed at certain points, through which the sewage can be spread over the whole area. The operation is very simple, and can be performed by a few outdoor laborers without any assistance from steam or horses. The overflow is permitted to continue for about twelve hours, and then by lowering the water level of the main sewer on one side of the field it naturally passes off so much of it that has not become amalgamated with the soil) into the lowered sewer. It is far from being purified yet, however, and is not only too valuable to be lost, but too dirty to be turned into the river. Accordingly, it passes over other fields leading to another strainer, and, after three or four processes of this kind, it finally emerges in a crystalline stream, whose purity will bear very favorable comparison with a considerable portion of the water supply of London. This has been accomplished in a few hours, and in a run, zig-zag ways, of some three or four miles.

But it is now time to say something as to the products of the irrigation. The Beddington Farm has a little of all sorts of agricultural produce within its bounds, but the principal crop is Italian ryegrass, which may grow 18 inches high. It will be noticed that this promises a double advantage, since it not only secures a considerable revenue, but provides a constant receptacle for the sewage. When the sewage is swollen by storm waters it can be let loose on meadows which require strong treatment, or on marginal garden lands, which might be ruined by the more powerful sewage. One of these ryegrass fields was laid down last autumn, and was cut for the first time on the 14th of last month, the sum received being £7 per acre. The landowner is now growing, and will very likely realize £12 an acre. There is an enormous demand. The surrounding farmers being very glad to carry away the grass in their own carts, and as a rule the most of it is sold and consumed the first year. A field of wheat last year produced 100 bushels to the acre, and with the straw gave a return of £22 per acre; a plot of potatoes fetched £10 per acre; and a plot of rhubarb, £25 10s. per acre. These are suggestive figures enough, and it might be added that the Croydon Local Board was carrying on similar operations on a very reasonable scale. But there is this drawback to the profit account, that the land is rented at the exorbitant figure of £10 to £12 per acre. Sewage farms, being yet in their infancy, there is a natural hostility to them in the minds of most people. Carpenter and his colleagues have had to encounter this hostility by paying prohibitive prices for the necessary soil to conduct their irrigation operations. Moreover, local boards are not as a rule ambitious to become high farmers, and that Croydon, like most of the towns of the west country, is not less than to demonstrate the full benefits of the system. Farming is with them merely a means to an end. Therefore, it is not surprising that the pecuniary side of the question is not so bright as the scientific side. But, after all, there must be room to be a clear gain; for any other result would mean that sewage would be more costly in its outlay and much less productive in its income. Here, however (and it is only fair to state the fact), the cost is greatly reduced by the level character of the country, and it must be recognized that if there is a nucleus of houses there is, loss of course, no difficulty in getting a town which does not go to the expense of elaborate machinery would be in a very much lessened condition.

We have omitted a most important portion of the question, namely, the opposition of the public. The opponents of irrigation, like those of almost every other new scheme, are not to be easily won over. They are not to be easily won over.

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