

THE RED BOX AT VESEY STREET.



PAST the Red Box at Vesey street
Swing two strong tides of hurrying feet,
And up and down and all the day
Rises a sullen roar, to say
The Bowery has met Broadway.
And where the confluent current brawls,
Stands, fair and dear and old, St. Paul's,
Through her grand window looking down
Upon the fever of the town;
Rearing her shrine of patriot pride
Above that hungry human tide
Mad with the lust of sordid gain,
Wild for the things that God holds vain;
Blind, selfish, cruel— Stay there! out
A man is turning from the rout,
And stops to drop a folded sheet
In the Red Box at Vesey street.

On goes he to the money-mart,
A broker, shrewd and tricky-smart;
But in the space you saw him stand,
He reached and grasped a brother's hand:
And some poor bed-ridden wretch will find
Bed-life a little less unkind
For that man's stopping. They who pass
Under St. Paul's broad roseate glass
Have but to reach their hands to gain
The pitiful world of prisoned pain.
The hospital's poor captive lies
Waiting the day with weary eyes,
Waiting the day, to hear again
News of the outer world of men,
Brought to him in a crumpled sheet
From the Red Box at Vesey street.

For the Red Box at Vesey street
Was made because men's hearts must beat;
Because the humblest kindly thought
May do what wealth has never bought.
That journal in your hand you hold
To you already has grown old,—
Stale, dull, a thing to throw away,—
Yet since the earliest gleam of day
Men in a score of hospitals
Have lain and watched the whitewashed walls;
Waiting the hour that brings more near
The Life so infinitely dear—
The Life of trouble, toil, and strife,
Hard, if you will—but Life, Life, Life!
Tell them, O friend! that life is sweet
Through the Red Box at Vesey street.

NEW YORK, January, 1894.

H. C. Bunner.

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND.

METHODS OF SEWAGE DISPOSAL.



It has hitherto been — and, in fact, it still is — the practice of the world to consider its wastes satisfactorily disposed of when they are hidden from sight. In spite of an almost universal outcry about sewer-gas, filth diseases and infective germs, the great mass, even of those who join in the cry, pay little heed to defects in the conditions under which they are living so long as they are not reminded by their eyes or their noses that their offscourings are still lurking near them.

The life of man involves both the production of food, directly or indirectly, by the growth of plants, and the consumption and destruction of the organized products of such growth. The production and the destruction are constant. Between consumption and renewed growth there intervenes a process which prepares what we reject for the renewed use of plants.

It is this intervening process that we have to consider in applying the comparatively new science of sewage disposal. The process itself has gone on from the beginning of the world, but it has mainly been left to unguided natural action, which takes no account of the needs and conditions of the life of man in modern communities, where "Out of sight, out of mind" no longer suffices.

The sewerage of towns and the drainage of important buildings are now controlled by expert engineers, who rarely fail to do their work reasonably well. The adoption of good methods and appliances for removing liquid wastes from houses and towns is becoming general. It will in time become universal.

This, however, is only the first step in sanitary improvement. It is only the step of removal. It gets our wastes out of our immediate neighborhood; it does not destroy them. It is now recognized that quick and complete removal is only the beginning of the necessary service, and that proper ultimate disposal is no less important to health, to decency, and to public comfort. The organic wastes of human life must be finally and completely consumed. It is not enough to get them out of the house and out of the town; until they are resolved into their elements their capacity for harm and for offense is not ended. It does not suffice to

discharge them into a cesspool, nor does it always suffice to discharge them into a harbor or into a watercourse.

Especially in connection with large foreign towns, efforts of the most costly character have been made to obviate accumulations due to the discharge of sewers. The floods made foul with the wastes of the huge population of London have been poured into the Thames until, in spite of years of effort to relieve that river, its condition has become, in the language of Lord Bramwell, "a disgrace to the metropolis and to civilization." The millions expended since 1850 on the still unsolved problem have not thus far effected more than a mitigation of the evil. London is to-day, apparently, as far as ever from its ultimate solution, though of course the former direct discharge of sewage all along the river, and the resulting local stench, have been forever suppressed. The case grows in gravity with the growth of the population, and measures which promise success when adopted are not able to cope with the greater volumes that are produced later. While substantial relief has been secured in the case of other towns in England, and on the continent of Europe, there is rarely as yet such an early and complete reduction of organic wastes, without offensive putrefaction, as the best sanitary condition demands.

In our own country, New York city, and the towns on the Mississippi and on other very large rivers, have such tidal and flood conditions as to secure satisfactory disposal by dilution and removal. At Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, the needed relief can, under the methods adopted, be secured only by works of the greatest magnitude and cost, while, as a rule, the smaller towns have yet to devise methods by which, unless they are exceptionally well placed, they can destroy their wastes at a practicable outlay.

Systematic works, chiefly involving removal through intercepting sewers, have, until recently, been confined to cities. Smaller towns are now perfecting their methods of removal, and there is a growing desire to find means for purifying the effluent of sewers which will not cost more than can be afforded. Interest is also growing among householders, who are becoming convinced of the dangers of cesspools, with their retention of putrefying wastes within con-