

SEVERAL OREGON CITIES LIABLE TO LAW, SAYS WHITE

Emptying of Sewage Into the Streams Illegal and Health Board Will Prosecute Cases, Says Officer.

Oregon towns that are preparing to empty sewage into other than navigable streams in the state will be liable to the law which forbids pollution of streams, said Dr. Calvin S. White, state health officer, yesterday.

Among the towns enumerated by Dr. White as being about to dispose of sewage illegally are Silverton into Silver creek; Lebanon into the Eastman; Roseburg into the Umpqua river.

Grants Pass, said Dr. White, has made an arrangement that will poison beautiful Rogue river and lessen the attractiveness of Rogue river valley for settlement. Grants Pass last year had a typhoid epidemic and has typhoid there now, which Dr. White thinks due to sewage disposal.

Salem and Albany, he said, are preparing to bring the water supply from Cascadia, where a hotel and campers have made the stream into a sewer.

Two Rivers As Sewers.
"The federal law," said Dr. White, "has permitted the transformation of the Columbia and Willamette rivers into sewers and they are sewers. But the state law forbids the pollution of branch streams and imposes a fine of \$25 for violating the law, which applies generally to any town, camper or other agency of pollution. The state board of health proposes that this law shall be enforced."

"The rapid growth of Oregon towns has made the disposition of sewage a problem for them all. But this very growth makes it the more vitally important that the streams be not polluted."

Theory Is Fallacy.
"There is a theory that water purifies itself. That is fallacy. Note the discharge from the sewer that empties into the Willamette on the east side just below the steel bridge. The milky stream shows plainly for a long distance. There is no purification there. Where the Amazon empties into the sea, fresh water may be found a mile from land, because of the strength and volume of current. Dilution is not purification."

"In the same way sewers emptying into salt water poison the water. Boston, it is reported, has found that the water along the shore is polluted for a distance of a mile and a half. To make this kind of disposition of sewage at all safe, it is necessary to extend the sewer beyond the low tide mark, and to fit it with a tide valve."

Serious Problem.
Dr. White added that the inevitable inter-relation between sewage disposal and pollution of streams had given Oregon a serious problem which must be solved now. Better, he said, that the growing towns should make a safe and sanitary beginning than to wait until they have reaped the harvest of typhoid fever and other water and sewage born epidemics.

One of the greatest dangers from which Portland is in this connection, he said, is from the likelihood that the city engineer will be successful in his effort to have the sewer which is to be constructed for the draining of the Peninsula country empty into Columbia slough, thus polluting the milk of several thousand cows, he declared, it would bring perhaps immediately an epidemic of typhoid fever into the city. Dr. White said further:

Three Forms of Disposal.
"The removal of sewage is not only a matter of convenience but also of vital importance to public health. The two essentials are first to remove quickly and to dispose of as castly as possible and the second to make such disposition as to harm nobody. Unfortunately in the disposition of sewage, the chances are usually the first thing considered and in many instances prevent the proper solution of the problem."

"The three forms of sewage disposal now are, first, dry sewage; second, pneumatic, and third, water carried. First, of course, is primitive and has the disadvantage not only of the odor but of pollution of the surrounding earth which in soil such as we have in Oregon with the amount of rainfall, the contamination easily goes from 50 to 100 feet. It has been figured that a cesspool 12x10 is sufficient to take care of the sewage of a family of five, providing this is cleaned twice a year but who in this country ever thinks of their being cleaned once in 20 years? The indoor closet with the outside cesspool is even worse than the outdoor cesspool because proper plumbing is rare and the ventilation is never taken care of so that effluvia is constantly entering the house. All of the dry sewage disposals in this country are simply makeshifts. Could they be taken care of as is done in Marseilles, Havre and in a number of French cities, as well as at Birmingham and Manchester where the sewage is received in metal buckets or tubs and is covered with dry earth and emptied at proper intervals, this would solve the sewage problem for all small cities more safely than the modern system emptying directly into some small stream. For a dry earth sewage, form is better than ashes and sand and charcoal is too expensive. Dry sewage, however, fails to take care of the sink water, kitchen and bath tub wastes and as these are frequently rich in nitrogenous matter, some preparation must be made to care for them. This can be done through broken tipping and used in a measure for subsoil irrigation."

One System Expensive.
"The pneumatic system such as is in use in Paris is very satisfactory, but expensive as the pump and the piping is simply separated from the water and the water is allowed to empty into the river. This system is also in use in some cities in Holland but the average municipality would find the cost prohibitive."

The Showers system, advocated in some European cities, is after all simply a water carried system. The water carriage has the advantage of taking everything and so far as a safe means is concerned, easily and quickly serves the purpose and were it not for the pollution of the streams that follows would be the most satisfactory.

Victor Hugo in his "Les Miserables" dwells extensively upon the crime of the century and whether or not his deductions are true, they are well worth reading and pondering over.

Americans Extravagant.
In America we are with our water supply, as we are with everything else, an extravagant nation. When European municipalities figure from 20 to 40 gal-

lons of water per capita per day, we in America use from 75 to 100. This, of course, adds to our volume of sewage and makes the care of it even more of a problem. Sanitary engineers all over the country are divided in opinion now as to the combined and separate systems of sewage disposal. In the combined where storm water, drain pipes from the house and all waste water is carried in one large conduit. In the separate system the house sewage is carried in a smaller sewer and the storm water in shallow conduits or even as was first installed in Salt Lake, allowed to run on top in gutters. This, however, I am told, is unsatisfactory and they are now making provisions for caring for the storm water. A combined sewer must, of course, be deeper in the ground, but the first cost is less to install. For the smaller sewer you must have steeper grades and the problem is one that each community must solve for itself.

It is a noteworthy fact that a community even more selfish than individuals and so long as their wastes are carried beyond their own boundaries, they care little for the welfare of any community beyond them. It is then the duty of the state board of health and of the legislature to enact such laws as will render it equally safe for all.

Better Laws Needed.
In England this is covered by national laws which are enforced. In some states in the United States, notably Massachusetts and Kansas, the state boards of health are given sovereign power over these matters. In several states in the union the matter of pollution of streams has been tried out in court and so far as I can find out, with the single exception of Indiana, the decisions have been in favor of the individual against the municipality. In Santa Rosa, an injunction was made permanent against the city and decision rendered in favor of the individual. The Virginia court also held the same conclusion.

In New York, the proprietor of an oyster bed obtained a judgment for the amount of the value of his oyster bed against the city on account of its pollution from their sewage. It has been argued that inasmuch as the organic matter in the sewage feeds the infusoria and crustaceans and they in turn feed fish and fish feed men that some value is thus received, but, of course, it is still a debatable fact that the sewage in eastern streams has destroyed the fishing industry; still the Passaic river, which was formerly one of the greatest shad streams in the world, is now devoid of merchantable fish and it seems a strange coincidence that with the completing of the large sewage districts draining several thousand people into the Willamette river of Portland, there is a marked decrease in the fish industry.

Debatable Questions.
The matter of sedimentation, of volume, and velocity, and of dilution are all debatable questions, and whole chapters could be written on any. It has been argued that a dilution of 1500 to 3500 is sufficient to make sewage water potable. However, this is not enough, because it has been proven that the typhoid bacilli can live in ice for 23 days. Therefore, the water would be dangerous for at least that period, which would mean at least 600 miles of travel for the water. The typhoid bacilli found in the algae and the scum that collect on pipes, and after these have dried for a period of three months upon being moistened and planted on agar, the bacilli promptly revives and multiplies.

The matter of septic tanks is also one over which there is a difference of opinion. However, properly constructed and properly maintained, they are of vast benefit by the addition and the pumping off of residual sludge which can be used for fertilizer, or could even be dried and burned, is at least a much more humane method than emptying direct into the stream.

Filter Was Nearly Perfect.
The matter of management of proper filter beds after the sewage has been tanked is being perfected, and sanitary engineers are constantly improving on a system which seems well high perfect now. The federal law allows the dumping of untreated sewage into navigable streams, and it is now and constantly increasing, a proven fact that the Willamette and the Columbia rivers are simply sewers for this great state, but I ask you to take some measure that all of the tributary streams shall be protected in the future. We are inviting colonists to come and settle our land, and it is a duty that we owe them to keep the streams in such a manner that a drink of what is apparently pure mountain water shall not be a poisoned beverage.

Santa Monica has apparently solved their problem well by electricity. Two of these plants will probably be erected in Oregon during the coming summer, and if the guarantee of the inventors is good, the disposition will, not only be inexpensive, but safe.

Journal Want Ads bring results.

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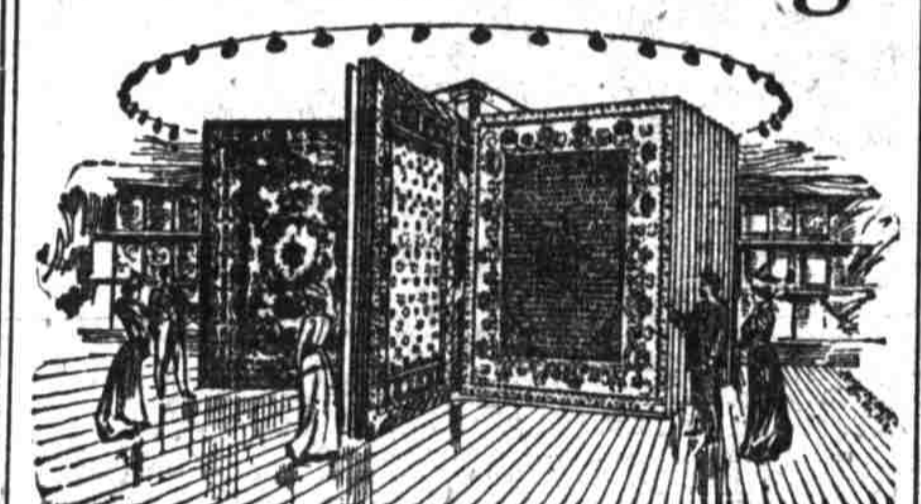
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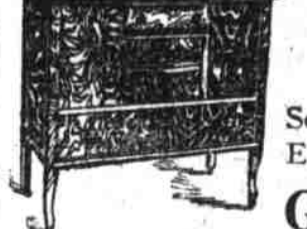
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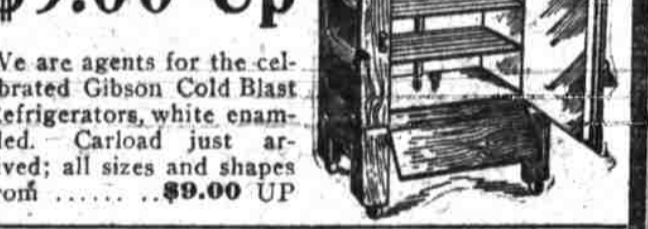
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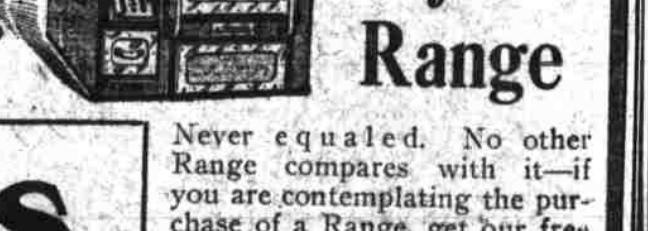
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