

which engineers and others hastened to embrace it,—because it appeared to me to violate the great principle which hitherto had guided us, of keeping the sewage as free as possible from putrefactive changes previous to its application to the land or artificial filters. Up to the present time (February, 1898) I have not seen any analytical results from this—the septic tank—method of treatment which have caused me to modify my opinion, although I need not say that when such evidence is forthcoming I shall at once admit my error." It may be added that as late as a few weeks ago Dr. Reid had not changed the opinion which he had been led to form respecting the merits of the Garfield filter as contrasted with the results obtained by the system in use at Exeter. Mr. Garfield, in a letter dated August 27th, 1898, says in reply to an inquiry, "With reference to the sludge, I think that with domestic sewage a proportion of it can be got rid of by using a large-grain filter first; but before the sewage is run on to this it ought to be passed through a small settling or detritus tank to remove the heavy matter. Coal will be found the most suitable material for the large-grain filter also." In coal districts this filter will be found to be a simple and inexpensive way of dealing with domestic sewage, as no costly tank is required—in one case the ground has simply been excavated and the vacant space filled in with coal in the manner described; the filtering material will last for an indefinite period, the "royalty" asked for is a merely nominal one, and the effluent is such that the most exacting river pollution inspector cannot possibly object to its direct passage into a water channel.—J. B. S.

(<sup>1</sup>) Report upon sewage disposal, bacteriological filters (tanks).

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#### THE TREATMENT OF IMBECILES AND EPILEPTICS.

The Local Government Board have sanctioned the acquisition of a large area of land by the Leicester Board of Guardians for the purposes of an experiment in the treatment of the imbeciles and epileptics now in the Leicester workhouse. The proposed new departure is the practical outcome of an inquiry instituted on the Continent by the Chorlton Board of Guardians, with the view of ascertaining the advantages of the method of treatment now adopted in Belgium and Germany.

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#### SHOULD IMBECILES WORK?

This question arose at the meeting of the Chester Board of Guardians lately upon a letter from Dr. Kenyon, the medical officer of health, stating that it had come to his knowledge that some of the imbeciles at the workhouse were employed mowing grass and chopping sticks. He thought the use of hedge clippers, scythes, &c., by them was highly dangerous. The clerk stated that the workhouse master considered that it was very much better that the imbeciles should be employed in some way, but he would submit the doctor's question to the department in London and have the matter settled. He (the clerk) thought if any of the imbeciles were dangerous it was the duty of the medical officer specifically to point them out. The master said in November the medical officer wrote a note to him strictly prohibiting the imbeciles from working or using any tools that were dangerous to themselves and others. The men were kept indoors for a short time until they clamoured to go to work. The matter was placed before the house committee, and they unanimously decided that the imbeciles should be allowed to work in future.—Any further action was deferred pending the reply of the Local Government Board.

It is somewhat surprising that Dr. Kenyon should be so ignorant of the treatment of the insane as to raise a question of this kind. Dr. Weatherly complains of the prejudice and ignorance of the general public; but it would seem necessary to inaugurate a crusade of information by beginning to instruct those who pre-eminently should know something of our work.

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