

IS CHICAGO A SWAMP?

A New Orleans View of It-Chicago Dirt and What Will She Do With It?

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She is Chicago and she is dirt. Chicago is positively the dirtiest city extant in any civilized or Christian country. A clean level lies behind her, without a rise, to the foot of the Rocky Mountains. A broad, clean inland sea lies in the front of her, or her people would have died with pestilence ten times over. She used to be scourged with cholera regularly in the old days, and her frightened citizens fled by thousands to Milwaukee and the towns down the lake. It was hoped that by sewerage the place and getting lake water to drink it might be made healthy if not clean. But the enormous death rate of the last half-year- double to treble that of New Orleans-is causing doubt upon this subject.

There is a well-built and comparatively clean centre in Chicago, but the city sweeps off, on all sides but the front, to a swamp. They call it a prairie there. In Louisiana they call it swamp. The outskirts of the city are built up with shanties, squatted in this swamp, or stuck upon posts to keep them out of it. Coming in on nearly all the railroads, notably the Michigan Southern or the Northwestern, the traveler passes through miles of those shanties, scarcely superior to the cabins on a rack-rented estate in Ireland, where naked babies and pigs tumble promiscuously. Chicago's face is fair enough, but, like Milton's monster, she ends "foul in many a scaly fold." She is the drabble-tall of all cities.

The centre nucleus and the parts where the rich dwell are sewerage. There are foul, slimy ditches for the draining of the rest. The sewerage is emptied into the river. The river has no current. It is a stagnant ditch. It is not a large ditch either, and divides as it crawls its foul way through the city into two branches, which are very small ditches indeed. These ditches are the open main sewers of the strong-smelling city. Into them are dumped the horrid abominations of several hundred thousand people.

Some years ago, these ditches could be smelled when the wind was favorable, ten miles it is said. They were simply sewers, and nothing else. Schooners, propellers, canalboats, all the craft of the harbor, lay lubber-like in this foul hell-broth, and the busy tugs, darting back and forth through the slab abominations, stirred up unspeakable stenches for the noses of mankind.

And here comes in our question, which is the question of our dirty sister of the loud-scented ditches. It was sought to help the city to a little whiff of decent air by turning the so-called river end for end, add making it think its tail was its head! It was a daring undertaking, but the Chicagoese are a daring people. So they dug out the Illinois Canal (which connects Chicago with the Illinois River), and thought the Chicago ditches would empty into that, since they wouldn't empty into the lake.

Some of the horrid stuff did drain off in the canal, and occasionally some clean lake water would run into the main river for a short distance, but the proportion of the sewage draining out was small compared to what remained, and the city is scarce better. Meanwhile the towns along the canal and the Illinois River are having their air and water polluted by the terrific dejections of Chicago.