

by the Wrekin? Here Sir Roderick Murchison established the Silurian system in the science of geology. This was in 1831. Before then the Old Red Sandstone was the limit of research. Every formation met below was dismissed under the vague title of graywacke. Sir Roderick found Shropshire to contain every sedimentary formation from lias to slate; and after a conscientious survey of all the strata, the series of rocks below the Old Red Sandstone, so associated with the popularity of Hugh Miller, was shown in a complete order between that formation and the ancient slate. The new system was found to contain fossilised specimens of the very earliest created life. The discovery opened out a daring field in geological science. The term Silurian owes its origin to the name of the powerful tribe which once inhabited the Wrekin country.

But our subject is scenery and not science, so let us return to the hills. The Wrekin is not the only hill of the district. There is the Wenlock Edge range of bold, steep, green ridges, abounding in views that thrill the artistic eye; there is Longmynd, rising to an elevation of 1,600 feet, with prospects that photograph themselves upon the memory; there is the picturesque range of uplands which comprises the Lawley, nearly 1,000 feet high; Caradoc, 1,200 feet; Hope Bowdler Hill, and Ragleth, 1,000 feet, with panoramic visions of hills rising above hills, and valleys meeting in valleys. The Wrekin reaches a height of 1,320 feet, an altitude that will appear contemptible to people who measure beauty as the rich vulgarian in Pygmalion's

studio measured art—by the lineal foot. But if the height of the Wrekin is small, the view from the summit is great. From the top of mountains boasting of a sensational height, the reward is generally one of clouds, tempered with fatal accidents. The ascent of the Wrekin is wood-shaded and easy, and the prospect is a panoramic picture that stuns the imagination with its breadth and beauty.

The Wrekin stands aloof from the other hills. It is a mountain with a personality and character of its own. Conical in form, and densely wooded to the very summit, it stands alone as if communing in solitude with its own sublime thoughts. And if a mountain is sentient, what an experience that grand old Wrekin has had! The history of the country it looks down upon is an epitome of the history of England. The Wrekin sheltered Caractacus holding the country with wild untrained valour against the victorious legions of Rome. It heard the Welsh harps tuned to inspire fierce border battles. It announced the coming of the Spanish Armada. The spring of water which sparkles in the sun to-day, and refreshes the holiday-makers from Wolverhampton or Birmingham (whom the railway brings to Wellington, a mile or more away) flashed in liquid light before

"The glory that was Greece  
And the grandeur that was Rome,"

and will perhaps bubble up, cold and crystal, when England herself has lived out the life given to nations.

EDWARD BRADBURY.

## SANITARY ASSURANCE.

**I**T is a healthy sign of the activity of modern thought that the question of house sanitation should receive so much attention. On all sides we hear reports of the development and vigour of numerous existing societies who make the public health their concern, and of the formation of others with practical objects of a similar kind. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the interests involved, and, since the population of our large towns is steadily increasing in a greater proportion than their area, these matters must sooner or later become of the greatest moment.

Apart from private enterprise, there can be no doubt that the existing condition of things is most unsatisfactory, and that there is a terrible absence of all supervision of sanitary arrangements in many of the houses of the metropolis. The so-called Sanitary Authority has no *locus standi* until a nuisance is known or suspected to exist, and the provisions for house drainage required by the law are wholly inadequate to secure wholesome conditions of existence.

The preservation of health, and all subjects appertaining thereto, have a paramount claim to our consideration for national as well as private reasons. The well-being of a people depends in no small

degree upon its power for work, and its vigour must be very seriously impaired if the vital importance of health be not duly appreciated. Dr. Richardson, when speaking on a recent occasion in the Chapter-house of St. Paul's Cathedral before the members of the Homiletical Society, called attention to the greater vitality which the Jewish people exhibited as compared with that of other races among whom their lot was cast. From this he proceeded to consider the cause of that vitality, and argued that it depended mainly on the observance of certain parts of the Mosaic sanitary laws. Amongst other aids to health suggested from the source named, he adduced five in chief: viz., Passover cleansing, rest from labour once in seven days, chastity and good domestic life, temperance and great circumspection in regard to foods, and care of the enfeebled and destitute of all ages of life. This illustration is the more valuable since it places clearly before us the national importance of the apparently insignificant details of daily life. It is, we conceive, a new view of things to place "the daily round, the common task," which every good housewife performs so cheerily, in the high position of a national service; but in the same way as these furnish opportunities for showing patient heroism and Christian fortitude

do they constitute the duties of a good citizen for the public welfare.

Although the greatest good of the greatest number is an expression which has been dedicated to improper uses, and given an improper meaning, in its true sense it is the true test of all measures of sanitary reform; and it is important that these should be of a popular character, and adapted to the needs of the masses, rather than limited in the scope of their operations and in the sphere of their usefulness.

There are some elements in this problem which are perhaps too frequently disregarded. Besides preventible diseases, which can be traced to causes under our control, there is no doubt that breathing vitiated air pre-disposes us to contract ailments which might not otherwise affect us; and a high authority instances this by remarking that a current of cool air, which a healthy man will think nothing of, will light up in another a dangerous bronchitis or a fatal pneumonia. Another and more common way in which people are influenced by unwholesome conditions of life is also frequently lost sight of. Although the operation of sewer air upon the system is not yet fully understood, it is sufficient for our present purpose to say that it poisons the blood, and it does this so gradually and insidiously that many who are hopeless invalids are in reality merely the victims of an almost suicidal negligence.

Professor F. de Chaumont, in a lecture at the London Institution, which has recently been published, has put the question upon a true basis. He prefaces his arguments by showing from the Registrar-General's Report that one-third of the whole mortality of the United Kingdom is due to diseases which are more or less preventible, and adds that, although it cannot be said that the best house sanitation would prevent the occurrence of them all, yet it would be possible to remove the cause of a great many of them, and to modify and mitigate others to a very great extent. Without entering into a discussion of the specific diseases which do as a matter of fact, or may possibly, arise from breathing foul air and using foul water, it is important to remember that, among others, that dreaded scourge of humanity, pulmonary consumption, is known to be in part produced by inhaling the organic poisons with which the air of a badly ventilated room is laden. The present movement acquires a peculiar value from the active part which is being taken in it by medical men of the highest standing, and this fact is a sufficient assurance that better sanitary arrangements than have hitherto been possible are within our reach. It is proposed by the formation of friendly societies, some of which have already commenced operations, to afford householders, at a most reasonable cost, the opportunity of having their dwellings inspected by specially qualified men, who will report to them what alterations are required. Upon the execution of the work in a satisfactory manner, the inspector will examine it, and make a report to the council or committee of the association,

consisting of medical men, architects, and engineers, who will, if satisfied that the essential requirements of modern science are complied with, issue their certificate to that effect. Facilities for periodical inspection at a still smaller charge will also be given, and, since no mechanical contrivance can safely be relied upon to continue perpetually in good working order, this last is a very important provision.

Further benefits to the community will probably result from this movement. It is at present a difficulty felt by conscientious landlords and builders that there is practically no means of satisfying an intending tenant that the house in question is in reality "fit for human habitation." The production of the certificate of an unimpeachable authority, such as the council of these associations would undoubtedly be, will certainly be a very great inducement to an intending occupier to take the proposed dwelling. It will, at the same time, be an additional and equally valuable boon to both parties if the certificate adds that the house is of substantial materials and is well built:—questions of scarcely less moment than those of a purely sanitary character. Such is the commercial immorality of the present time, that it is unfortunately necessary to discover whether proper timber, bricks, and mortar have been used in the construction of a new house; and the glaring instances of a nefarious style of building which are so frequently being made public foster so great a distrust of modern builders, that it is to be feared that the innocent suffer with the guilty, and that many new houses which are well built and well drained remain vacant for a longer period than would otherwise be the case, and at a ruinous loss to those interested in them. On the other hand, it is so easy to comply with the law as it is, that many tenants find themselves the victims of an unscrupulous man, who, having got them into a house that has passed the merely nominal examination, which is all that the law requires, but which is wholly unfit to live in according to the principles of modern science, refuses to carry out any of the necessary alterations, and leaves them to do this at their own expense, or to get out of the house on the best terms they can. The only remedy which exists for such a state of things is supplied by a careful inspection of the premises in question, and there is no doubt that many would be more careful to see that this was done before they became tenants if they were not deterred by the expense. This objection has been removed by the formation of these associations, and it is to be hoped that in future every intending tenant will require the production of some certificate of the kind we have already described, or, if that is not forthcoming, will for his own sake have the premises he proposes to take inspected before entering into any agreement as to their tenancy. It will be seen from the foregoing remarks that Sanitary Assurance is no mere chimerical scheme, but is a practical measure, which must be productive of incalculable benefits to the community at large.

W. M. C.