institutions are also unusually circumstanced; there is the combination of medical man, clerk of the works, engineer, plumber, mason, on the spot, with a full knowledge (if—and the proviso is not unimportant—plans have been conscientiously kept up to date) of the drainage arrangements, whose business it is to discover and remove sanitary defects which may be associated with such a disease as enterica, with all possible dispatch. It is instructive to note how frequently local defects of drainage are found in connection with the outbreak of the disease in asylums, and the disappearance of the latter on remedying these defects. But whilst the practical result in these instances of local occurrence is highly satisfactory, we are unfortunately in most instances entirely ignorant of the mode of introduction of the typhoid germ. And even if it can be established that a case has been originally introduced from without, and we are able with plausibility to suggest that thus the contents of faulty drains have become infected, that amounts to very little in the way of explanation, granting even a local leakage to have been discovered. It is very far from clear in, we think, the majority of instances how infection is carried to the inmates of a ward in the vicinity of which a leaky or choked drain is found. The evidence, as far as we know it, is against the conveyance of pathogenic organisms (excepting *Staphylococcus pyogenes*) in sewer gas. And in the majority of cases it is most difficult to imagine how the *materies morbi* could be wafted into a ward with dried particles upon which it may have lodged.

Formalin as a Disinfectant.

Formalin is a substance which has already attracted the attention of our pathologists, and promises to be, perhaps, the most useful addition to our laboratory armamentarium which has been made for the last generation. It has been steadily growing in favour also as a disinfectant, and bids fair to supersede perchloride of mercury in the disinfection of buildings. We would draw the attention of our readers to an article on "Household Disinfection by Formaldehyde" in the *British Medical Journal* of December 25th, 1897, by Drs. Wyatt Johnston and D. D. McTaggart. These observers, working in Canada, have confirmed the observations made in England, France, and the United States as to the value of this drug. They claim that it is effective, cheap, and not destructive. In the method which

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they adopt the gas is liberated under pressure from a mixture of equal parts of formaldehyde and 20 per cent. calcium chloride solution. They use an apparatus made by the Sanitary Construction Company of New York. They say "we found it was advisable to use larger quantities of formaldehyde than are generally advised, and our results, at first disappointing, became very satisfactory upon using one pound of formaldehyde per 1000 cubic feet."

Dr. Rambaut, of the Richmond Asylum, Dublin, tells us that experiments which he made last autumn by culture methods gave strong proofs of the value of formalin as a sterilising agent, the apparatus used in that institution being Trillat's for the generation of formic aldehyde vapour under pressure from an aqueous 30 per cent. solution of formaldehyde, free from methyl alcohol, containing calcium chloride in solution, and known in trade as formochlorol.

Chargeability of Irish Lunatics.

The methods which Irishmen adopt for seeking redress of grievances are probably beyond the comprehension of any other people.

We mentioned in the January number of this Journal that the Governors of the Richmond Asylum and the Guardians of the two Dublin workhouses contemplated requesting the Chief Secretary for Ireland to introduce provisions effecting a law of settlement into his new Local Government Bill. A deputation, representing the three bodies in question, accordingly waited upon Mr. Gerald Balfour on January 18th. This deputation added to its original programme a request that the Treasury rate in aid should be increased from 4*s.* per head per week to some larger but unspecified sum, and this although it would appear from a subsequent correspondence in the newspapers that the Chief Secretary "had written to say that the speakers must confine their remarks to the question of 'the deportation and chargeability of lunatics.'" One member of the deputation, being a prominent poor-law guardian, struck new ground by complaining that the lunatics were not taken proper care of. It turned out that he meant the lunatics in the workhouses; and while nobody denied the justice of this confession, its pertinency to the question at issue is by no means clear. Another speaker boldly suggested that the Treasury should contribute half the expense of maintenance, and that the other half should be levied by

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