

DISCUSSION

Professor Louis said that the authors mentioned that the washing arrangement always took the form of a fine shower or spray. It might be interesting to point out that that was not the original form. At first, in Germany, plunge-baths were used, but it was found that contagious diseases, particularly of the eye, were communicated by this means, and therefore the law made the use of the shower-baths compulsory in Germany. In view of the possibility of baths being adopted in this country, it would be well to remember that the Germans had gone through that experience. In one or two collieries in Westphalia, where he had seen the arrangement, there were seats made of enamelled cast-iron or concrete in front of the sprays, so that the men could sit down when washing. Another point was in regard to very few padlocks being in use. That did not altogether agree with what he (Professor Louis) was told. He had been told that they had a great deal of trouble in Westphalia owing to thieving going on, so that they instituted a rule that every chain must be padlocked, but that each miner must provide his own padlock and key. Finally, he would like to draw attention to the fact that in all the metal mines in this country it had been the custom for a great number of years to have what was called a "dry." In all the Cornish mines, and in most of the lead-mines and ironstone-mines, and, indeed, he thought all the mines under the Metalliferous Mines Act, a "dry" was provided in which the man changed his clothing.

Mr. C. Herman Merivale said one of the difficulties was to ensure privacy for the men. They would not wash in a crowd, they would want privacy, and that meant partitions. Tiles were made now with locking joints, very narrow, not more than an inch wide, and there would be no difficulty in making partitions in tile slung from wire rods, which would not occupy much space, and that would overcome the difficulty of considerable extra expense in making partitions. He had tried to get the men at Middleton to adopt the bath system, and had offered them partitions, but they objected to the whole thing.

Mr. J. H. Merivale indorsed what Professor Louis had said. His experience of baths went back forty years. In Belgium they did not use the spray at all; each man had a little separate bath. The last time he had to speak on this subject was in a different atmosphere, where they were strictly commercial, and that might be his excuse for saying he was the only man who approved of compulsory baths. Looking in the direction in which things were trending, he was inclined to think that they would have to supply their men with baths; for many reasons, he thought, it would be an excellent thing if they did, and unless they made such arrangements as had been described they would have to put baths in the workmen's houses. His experience corresponded with what the paper said as regards the cost—£4 or £5 per man employed—but he did not think they could put baths into the existing houses at anything like that figure. There were two other reasons which inclined him to be favourable to baths; one was it made it much more comfortable and convenient for the women, and, again, they all knew the miner, with very few exceptions, had a longer expectation of life than any other working-man, the reason, he believed, being that he had plenty of work, plenty of food, and plenty of washing. But he suffered more than others from bronchial troubles, and he (Mr. Merivale) believed that that was very largely due to standing about after coming out of the mine in a heated condition.

The President (Mr. M. W. Parrington) said that one point which struck him was as to the nature of the water. One might get oneself fairly clean with 6½ gallons of Newcastle water, but he was doubtful if they could accomplish that with 6½ or even 8½ gallons of the limestone water in Durham.
