Dublin to the soil becoming saturated with faecal matter and specifi­cally infected. The ratio of cases to population living in Dublin on loose porous gravel soil for the ten years 1881-1891 was 1 in 94, while that of those living on stiff clay soil was but I in 145. “ This is as we should expect, since the movements of ground air are much greater in loose porous soils than in stiff clay soils.” A foul gravel soil is a most dangerous one on which to build. For warmth, for dryness, for absence of fog, and for facility of walking after rain, just when the air is at its purest and its best, there is nothing equal to gravel; but when gravel has been rendered foul by infil­tration with organic matters it may easily become a very hotbed of disease.  **(J. L.** N.)

SOISSONS, a city of northern France, in the department of Aisne, 65 m. N.E. of Paris by the railway to Laon. Pop. (1906), 11,586. Soissons, pleasantly situated amongst wooded hills, stands on the left bank of the Aisne, the suburbs of St Vaast and St Médard lying on the right bank. The cathedral of Notre-Dame was begun in the second half of the 12th century and finished about the end of the 13th. It is 328 ft. long and 87 wide, and the vaulting of the nave is 100 ft. above the pave­ment. The single tower dates from the middle of the 13th century and is an imitation of those of Notre-Dame of Paris, which it equals in height (216 ft.). The south transept, the oldest and most graceful portion of the whole edifice, terminates in an apse. The façade of the north transept dates from the end of the 13th century. The apse and choir retain some fine 13th-century glass. Considerable remains exist of the magnifi­cent abbey of St Jean-des-Vignes, where Thomas Becket resided for a short time. These include the ruins of two cloisters (the larger dating from the 13th century), the refectory, and above all the imposing façade of the church (restored). Above the three portals (13th century) runs a gallery, over which again is a large window; the two unequal towers (230 and 246 ft.) of the 15th and early 16th centuries are surmounted by beautiful stone spires, which command the town. The church of St Léger, which belongs to the 13th century, was formerly attached to an abbey of the Génovéfains. Beneath are two Romanesque crypts. The royal abbey of Notre-Dame, now a barrack, was founded in 660 for monks and nuns by Leutrade, wife of Ebroïn, the celebrated mayor of the palace. The number of the nuns (216 in 858), the wealth of the library in manuscripts, the valuable relics, the high birth of the abbesses, the popularity of the pilgrimages, all contributed to the importance of this abbey, of which there exist only inconsiderable remains. The wealthiest of all the abbeys in Soissons, and one of the most important of all France during the first two dynasties, was that of St Médard, on the right bank of the Aisne, founded about 560 by Clotaire L, beside the villa of Syagrius, which had become the palace of the Frankish kings. St Médard, apostle of Vermandois, and kings Clotaire and Sigebert, were buried in the monastery, which be­came the residence of 400 monks and the meeting-place of several councils. It was there that Childeric III., the last Merovingian, was deposed and Pippin the Short was crowned by the papal legate, and there Louis the Pious was kept in captivity in 833. The abbots of St Médard coined money, and in Abelard's time (12th century) were lords of 220 villages, farms and manors. At the battle of Bouvines (1214) the abbot commanded 150 vassals. In 1530 St Médard was visited by a procession of 300,000 pilgrims. But the religious wars ruined the abbey, and, although it was restored by the Benedictines in 1637, it never recovered its former splendour. Of the churches and the conventual buildings of the ancient foundation there hardly remains a trace. The site is occupied by a deaf and dumb institution, the chapel of which stands over the crypt of the great abbey church, which dates from about 840. In the crypt is a stone coffin, said to have been that of Childebert II., and close at hand is an underground chamber, reputed to have been the place of captivity of Louis the Pious.

The civil buildings of the town are not of much interest. The hôtel-de-ville contains a library and a museum with collec­tions of paintings and antiquities. The foundation of the hôtel- dieu dates back to the 13th century. The town has a large botanical garden. Soissons is the seat of a bishop and a sub- prefect, and has tribunals of first instance and of commerce, a communal college and higher ecclesiastical seminary. Among the industrial establishments are iron and copper foundries, and factories for the production of boilers, agricultural imple­ments and other iron goods, straw hats, glass and sugar. Grain, haricot beans of exceptional quality, and timber are the principal articles of trade.

Soissons is generally identified with the oppidum of Gallia Belgica, called *Noviodunum* by Caesar. Noviodunum was the capital of the Suessiones, who occupied twelve towns, and whose king, Divitiacus, one of the most powerful in Gaul, had extended his authority even beyond the sea among the Britons. In 58 B.c. Galba, king of the Suessiones, separated from the confederation of the Belgians and submitted to the Romans. At the beginning of the empire Noviodunum took the name of *Augusta Suessionum,*and afterwards that of *Suessiona,* and became the second capital of Gallia Belgica, of which Reims was the metropolis. The town was before long surrounded with a regular wall and de­fended by a citadel, and it became the starting-point of several military roads (to Reims, Château-Thierry, Meaux, Paris, Amiens and St Quentin). Christianity was introduced by St Crispin and St Crispinian, men of noble birth, who, however, earned their livelihood by shoemaking, and thus became patrons of that craft. After their martyrdom in 297 their work was continued by St Sinitius, the first bishop of Soissons. After the barbarians had crossed the Rhine and the Meuse Soissons became the metropolis of the Roman possessions in the north of Gaul, and on the defeat of Syagrius by Clovis the Franks seized the town. It was at Soissons that Clovis married Clotilde, and, though he afterwards settled at Paris, Soissons was the capital of his son Clotaire, and afterwards of Chilperic I., king of Neustria. It was not till the time of Chilperic's son, Clotaire II., that the kingdom of Soissons was incorporated with that of Paris. Pippin the Short was at Soissons proclaimed king by an assembly of *leudes* and bishops, and he was there crowned by the papal legate, St Boniface, before being crowned at Saint Denis by the pope himself. Louis the Pious did penance there after being deposed by the assembly at Compiègne. Under Charles the Fat (886) the Normans failed in an attempt against the town, but laid waste St Médard and the neighbourhood. In 923 Charles the Simple was defeated outside the walls by the supporters of Rudolph of Burgundy, and Hugh the Great besieged and partly burned the town in 948. Under the first Capets Soissons was held by hereditary counts (see below), frequently at war with the king or the citizens. The communal charter of the town dates from 1131. At a synod held at Soissons in 1121 the teachings of Abélard were condemned, and he was forced to retract them. In 1155, at an assembly of prelates and barons held at Soissons, Louis VII. issued a famous decree forbidding all private wars for a space of ten years; and in 1325 Charles the Fair replaced the mayor of Soissons by a royal provost dependent on the bailiwick of Vermandois, the inhabi­tants retaining only the right of electing four *échevins.* The town had to suffer severely during the war of the Hundred Years; in 1414, when it was held by the Burgundians, it was captured and sacked by the Armagnacs under the dauphin ; and this same fate again befell it several times within twenty years. The Treaty of Arras (1435) brought it again under the royal authority. It was sacked by Charles V. in 1544 and in 1565 by the Huguenots, who laid the churches in ruins, and, supported by the prince of Condé, count of Soissons, kept possession of the town for six months. During the League Soissons eagerly joined the Catholic party. Charles, duke of Mayenne, made the town his principal residence, and died there in 1611. A European congress was held there in 1728. In 1814 Soissons was captured and recaptured by the allies and the French. In 1815, after Waterloo, it was a rallying point for the vanquished, and it was not occupied by the Russians till the 14th of August. In 1870 capitulated to the Germans after a bombardment of three days.

Counts of Soissons.—In the middle ages Soissons was the chief town of a countship belonging in the 10th and 11th centuries to a family which apparently sprang from the