

9.—WAIOTAHĪ.

SIR,—

Office, Waiotahi Local Board of Health, 20th May, 1876.

I have the honor to enclose you the report of the Waiotahi Local Board of Health, as asked for by your letter of May 15th.

V. E. Rice, Esq., Secretary,
Central Board of Health, Auckland.

I have, &c.,
F. C. DEAN,
Secretary to the Board of Health.

[COPY.]

THE Local Board of Health, Waiotahi, have the honor to report, for the information of the Central Board of Health, Auckland, that the district over which they are placed in authority has, since December last, been visited by an endemic disease, the symptoms of which are similar to that of scarlet fever, but very much milder, and also by the disease of scarlet fever;—the former necessitating but from a few hours' to a few days' confinement to the bed, and being unattended by fatal results, whereas the latter has resulted in about one death in every ten cases that have occurred, and death has frequently taken place about forty-eight hours after the patient has been first attacked.

The powers granted under the Public Health Act to Local Boards, to cope with or stop the spread of any contagious or infectious disease, when such breaks out within their district, are virtually nil. It is compulsory on the Local Board to expend the local rates for sanitary purposes; but power to stop the spread of, or to stamp out disease at its first appearance, is withheld.

To isolate within their own houses or allotments families having contagious disease; to prevent persons, other than nurses appointed for that purpose by the Board, visiting affected houses and so spreading the disease; to prevent public passenger vehicles being used to convey to the cemeteries those who have been resident in the house in which death from contagious disease has occurred; to prevent those likely, from the last-named or other causes, imparting disease to others, by following as mourners any funeral, with many other similar powers, should be possessed by Local Boards; and the Waiotahi Local Board of Health exceedingly regret that the Central Board of Health, Auckland, have for month after month allowed the disease of scarlet fever to spread and obtain a firm footing at the Thames, without exercising the powers they possess, by making regulations under the second subsection of clause 21 of the Public Health Act, for purposes similar to those enumerated above, the which subsection reads as follows:—

“From time to time after the issuing of any such order as last aforesaid, and whilst the same shall continue in force, the Central Board of Health for the province within which the part or place or parts or places to which such order applies is or are situate, may issue such directions and regulations as such Central Board shall think fit, for the prevention as far as possible, or mitigation, of epidemic, endemic, or contagious disease, and from time to time in like manner may revoke, renew, and alter such directions and regulations, or substitute such new directions and regulations as to such Central Board may seem expedient;” and without having delegated the power to carry out such regulations, when made, to the Local Board or other persons to enforce.

The Local Board desire to report that they consider the closets attached to all schools and mines where many hands are employed should not be a wooden erection with a hole dug in the earth for the reception of excrement, the soil and filth from which soaks through the earth, or overflows, and is washed by the rains into all the gutters and water tables around.

During the months of March, April, May, June, 1875, this district was visited by measles that carried off a great number of children; and probably to this may in some measure be attributed the reason why scarlet fever is not more rife within the district than it is at present. But the Board desire to record the opinion expressed by its medical officer, that this epidemic is surely and rapidly spreading, about thirty cases being known at the present time to exist within a circle of a few yards of a house in which two deaths from this disease lately occurred.

The want of pure water for drinking and household purposes, in almost every part of the district, is, in the opinion of the Board, one of the great causes of illness amongst the children in the district. Water running from drives in many of the mines is the only water available.

The Board's officer has from time to time visited and inspected every house within the district, and supplied with chloride of lime those who from poverty were unable to purchase the same. The privies and drains of the houses have been cleaned and disinfected—notice to do so within a given time being served on all owners of premises who were neglectful in this matter.

In every case where the Medical Officer to the Board has considered isolation advisable, even when the house in which the patient resided was detached by a considerable space from other houses, the Board has endeavoured to secure its being carried out by providing medical attendance, and in one instance a nurse for the family, conditionally on isolation being observed; but, generally speaking, within two or three days, neighbours (often women with children in arms) have visited the sick family, and thus ran the risk of carrying the disease into their own households; the warnings of the medical man and of the Board's officer being powerless to prevent it.

In conclusion, the Board would urge the necessity of the Public Health Act being amended so as to give to Local Boards of Health power to take the necessary and often immediate action to stamp out or prevent the spread of contagious or infectious diseases.

20th May, 1876.

ALEXANDER BRODIE, Chairman,
Waiotahi Local Board of Health.

10.—KAUAERANGA.

Shortland, 24th May, 1876.

THE Local Board of Health of the Kauaeranga District beg to report, for the information of the Central Board of Health, as follows:—

Two cases of scarlet fever of a mild type were reported in this district, one on 26th March and the other on 7th April, both of which were duly notified to the Central Board; and as no further