

The Ventilation of Schools.

This is a subject of much importance, for it is evident that a child cannot thrive, and much less be capable of mental effort, in an atmosphere vitiated with the products of respiration. Any one who has had occasion to visit a class-room during school-hours would not fail to be struck with the offensiveness of the air. It is not too much to say that in the majority of schools insufficient cubic space is provided, and when it is considered that natural ventilation is solely relied on for changing the air in the class-rooms a minimum of 200 cubic feet per scholar should be insisted upon. In some class-rooms known to the writer barely 80 cubic feet are provided.

This briefly outlines some experiences of school sanitation. It is a matter for regret that the writer has been unable to pay more attention to a subject that has such an important bearing on the well-being of the nation. During the year it is to be hoped that the study of sanitation will be introduced into schools, for the earlier its principles are inculcated the more permanent are likely to be the impressions retained. Already the officers of the Education and Health Departments have agreed as to the necessity for some form of instruction, both to teachers and scholars, and only the pressure of work has postponed a definite decision being arrived at between the heads of these Departments as to what form the instruction shall take.

FOOD-SUPPLY.

Visits of inspection have often brought to light some of the insanitary conditions under which food is prepared or stored. These conditions, as may be naturally inferred, are more prevalent in the country districts than in the larger towns, where in many cases by-laws provide as to manner in which certain articles of food are to be stored.

Dairies.—In Wellington fresh by-laws are being framed regulating the conditions under which dairy produce shall be stored. These are very necessary. The most usual faults, however, in connection with dairies in the larger towns are unsatisfactory drainage arrangements and accumulation of refuse about the premises. In one large town, a shed that had received a license as a dairy was also used as a store-room for soiled linen. As dairies are supposed to be under the control of the Agricultural Department, little inspection has been made in country districts, except in those cases where the existence of infectious disease or insanitary conditions were known or suspected.

Fish.—Some loads of fish have been condemned as unfit for human consumption.

Fruit.—A great deal of fruit arrives at the markets in a questionable state. It is sold by auction and sorted afterwards. Very little bad fruit, however, is actually exposed for sale. The practice of Chinamen in ripening bananas in ill-ventilated cupboards by means of artificial heat would not commend itself to the epicure. At the same time, in justice to the Celestial, be it said that the cleanliness of his shop will often compare very favourably with that of the European fruiterer.

Butchers' Shops.—The condition of some of the up-country butchers' shops is little short of revolting. Even the front premises are often in a filthy state, being coated with grease and dust. But the back premises show how the "small goods" are prepared. It is not unusual to find the room where sausages are made also used as a harness-room, the floors of which are generally coated with grease and the walls with cobwebs. The sausage-machine is generally caked with filth, and the brine-tubs often look as if they would be the better for a good scrape. In the towns, however, these conditions do not obtain; but at the same time very great improvements could be made about many of these premises.

Bakers.—Some of the bakehouses in Wellington require to be placed in a thorough state of sanitary repair, and also to conform to the Factories Act with regard to situation and periodical whitewashing. As in the case of some of the up-country butchers' shops, the condition of some bakehouses leaves much to be desired.

OFFENSIVE TRADES.

A good deal of time has been taken up in inspecting some of these trades which are described as offensive in the First Schedule of the Public Health Act. A good deal of unnecessary trouble has been given by those persons who do not recognise that it is impossible to conduct some of the trades mentioned without causing a certain amount of effluvium. If the representations of these people were attended to trade would be driven from the country. Owners of such premises are required to conform to section 72 of the Public Health Act, and in the majority of cases they cheerfully comply with the requirements and suggestions of the Department.

FREEZING-WORKS, ETC.

The drainage of some of these works, is a matter of serious consideration. In many instances the land adjoining them is unsuitable for irrigation, and the only alternative is to allow the drainage—after going through a settling-tank—to run into the nearest river. Of course, a good deal of matter that would be offensive is used up in the "by-products" of the industry, so practically little more than bloodstained water and dilute caustic-soda solution is, at the worst, likely to gain access to the stream.

Many complaints are made about the odour in the neighbourhood of these works when the "digester" is blown off. But at Gisborne and Wanganui the gases generated in the digester are led into the furnace and consumed before "blowing off." By observing that precaution very little nuisance is occasioned.

DRAINAGE OF DAIRY FACTORIES AND CREAMERIES.

This has given rise to considerable correspondence. There is no doubt that the discharge of the washings into a stream often occasions considerable nuisance. But a good deal depends upon the general management of the premises. Experiments are now being made as to the best manner