

The home and trade garbage meanwhile continues to be carried to some long-suffering suburb, and there left to breed rats and evil odours. I attempted to obtain improvement, especially in the matter of fish-refuse, which, sold as manure, was causing a nuisance in the Mount Roskill district. In this I was successful, securing a mitigation of the evil by compelling the farmers using it to plough it in quickly, and avoid places too near houses and public roads. The Road Board, however, did not pass the by-laws suggested by me, and therefore but half-measures have been secured.

Ruinous Houses.—Twenty-five ruinous and insanitary houses and two insanitary stables in the city have been condemned by the Department during the year. These represent but a fraction of the number which should be removed, since the city is liberally supplied with hovels which would disgrace a Whitechapel slum; but the action of the Council was such as to render efforts in this direction mere waste of energy, and no power (except epidemics of dangerous and infectious disease) is given to the Department over ruinous houses. One house and one stable were removed voluntarily by the owner. Legal action was taken by the Council in regard to two houses owned by the occupiers, who were living in a deplorable condition, and these houses have now been removed. But in regard to blocks of premises owned by more influential persons the Council took no steps. In one case a few bits of tin and wood and a coat of paint on the wall next the street was accepted as sufficient to place the house in good sanitary condition.

The *abattoir* question remains in the same position as a year ago. Conferences have been held and sites examined to no purpose. At one time even the Council adopted a suitable site at Otahuhu, only to rescind the motion at a subsequent meeting. It sufficiently illustrates the extraordinary attitude of our civic rulers on this matter to note that during the discussion on one site, which would have involved a long and expensive sewer, it was proposed by one Councillor to dispose of offensive matter by dropping it into a deep hole in the ground. Meanwhile the condition of the present slaughter-yard has become such that, personally, I have felt it safer to refuse to allow meat killed there to be used in my household.

The *keeping of animals* in the city calls for reform, especially as regards the structure of stables. The filthy custom of keeping fowls in the back yards, either loose or in ill-cleansed runs, is not conducive to cleanliness or health. The suggestion of the Department to regulate this matter by by-laws was not given effect to. Back yards in general are dirty and ill-kept, partly owing to lack of refuse-removal. I have suggested a by-law compelling the paving or asphaltting of a certain area round each house; but the matter is still *sub judice*.

Sanitary Inspection.—Handicapped by the present lack of by-laws, and the frugality of the Council as regards assistance, sanitary inspection in the city is not encouraging to the enthusiast. However, some sound work has been accomplished. In the matter of disinfection of houses especially I am glad to be able to report favourably, and I do not doubt that much infectious disease has been prevented by the vigorous measures adopted. Nothing has been done towards providing a steam disinfector for clothing, &c. Possibly this may be arranged when the Infectious Diseases Hospital is an accomplished fact.

The Suburbs.

The administration of local government in the hands of the eighteen little districts surrounding Auckland does not offer much encouragement to those interested in the sanitary advancement of the district. A few of these bodies make earnest efforts towards improvement in matters hygienic, but are hampered by lack of funds and the utter indifference of the ratepayers. In others the chief ambition begins and ends in the keeping-down of rates.

No real improvement is possible until these bodies cease to exist as independent sanitary authorities. A Greater Auckland would accomplish this, but has against it a determined opposition, which places the scheme on too nebulous a basis for practical purposes. A Board, constituted like the Sydney Metropolitan Sewage Board, might prove more feasible. This body should control not only drainage and water-supply, but also nightsoil and refuse removal. It should have power to frame uniform sanitary by-laws for the district, and should possess a sufficient staff of inspectors to enforce these laws. Co-operation in the carrying-out of any scheme is at present impossible.

The *Arch Hill Gully Sewer* is no nearer accomplishment than it was a year ago. The bodies concerned are all anxious for the work, but they cannot agree as to essential details. A draft of a form of agreement was prepared at my request by the Crown Solicitor, but it failed to meet the approval of the Committee appointed to consider the question, and it was further pointed out that an agreement would require every little detail being therein stated, and the impossibility of getting unanimity as to such details made this method impracticable. Solicitors were then appointed by the delegates to go into the question of a combination under section 2 or section 66 of the Health Act. But here, too, the difficulties were too great, owing to the lack of definitiveness in the Act as to the status of the administrative body so formed. It was hoped that the amendment of 1902 would place this matter aright, but in this we were disappointed. The only way out of the difficulty seems to be to have an Act framed similar to the Hobson's Bay Watershed Sewage Act, and this may be taken in hand during the approaching parliamentary session. Meanwhile, the districts near the gully suffer from the intolerable condition of the stream in this gully, which is merely an open sewer.

My effort to secure combination for the purpose of securing efficient sanitary inspection did not meet with any support.

Grey Lynn Borough continues to show some vigour in its conduct of sanitary affairs. The sewerage has been extended, and an improvement effected in house-connections by the introduction of a boundary-trap, and ventilation of the drains.