

SANITARY INSPECTORS.

In last year's report mention was made of the need for a better system of sanitary inspection, especially as regards the provincial towns and country districts, where inspection is often intrusted to individuals who, besides possessing very limited knowledge of the first principles of sanitation, are still further handicapped by the multifarious nature of the duties attached to the office of inspector of nuisances. In many instances local authorities have adopted our suggestions, and combined into sub health districts under the charge of a sanitary inspector who, though paid by the local bodies, is appointed by and is under the control of the Department. In this manner much valuable work has been done, especially with regard to the isolation of cases of infectious disease, and disinfection. The local authority has no longer to telegraph to headquarters to know what is to be done with a case of scarlet fever. The Inspector is on the spot to advise, to see that all precautions are carried out, that children do not attend school from an infected house, and that milk is not distributed from an infected dairy. Naturally enough, many local bodies hesitate to pay for the services of "another inspector," and regard with suspicion the suggestions of the Department as the "thin end of the wedge." They can scarcely disabuse their minds of the suspicion that if once beguiled into a little outlay on sanitary matters the "ravening maw" of the Department will not be satisfied, but that other demands must follow. However, these suspicions must be lived down, and in the meantime we must rest content with the knowledge that the optimistic and misdirected gentleman who, in addition to collecting the dog-tax and inspecting fire-escapes and vehicles, reports monthly to his Council that the sanitary condition of the town is "excellent" is rapidly becoming a figure of the past.

The local bodies surrounding New Plymouth, Wanganui, Palmerston, Feilding, Marton, and Masterton have appointed inspectors in the manner suggested by the Department. One great objection to the scheme is the size of the various sub-districts, and there is no doubt that in the event of a general outbreak of infectious disease the inspectors would be unable to attend to all the sanitary requirements of the areas under their charge. But this, however, could easily be rectified by reinforcing them with additional assistance from headquarters, and this the Department has promised to do, free of cost to the local bodies, should the exigencies of the case warrant it. In non-epidemic times inspectors should be able to attend to the wants of their districts, and, although as many inspections may not be made as under the old *régime*, yet a better system exists, and offenders against sanitary law can be brought to book promptly. In addition to their ordinary duties, inspectors have been instructed to collect, and submit to the Department for examination, samples of water, food, and pathological specimens, and to make themselves generally useful.

Many persons labour under the delusion that once a system of drainage has been installed no form of sanitary inspection is necessary. Never was there a greater mistake. Skilled inspection is even more necessary in a sewered than in a non-sewered town. A badly executed drainage system is worse than none, and a system, however good, where the house connections are faulty is little less than dangerous. To see that the necessary fitments are provided to prevent the entry of sewer-air into a building is one of the first duties of an inspector. Nor must it be forgotten that the accumulation of rubbish is just as likely to take place, and is therefore just as dangerous to the community in a sewered as in a non-sewered town. In a certain town, that some two years ago adopted a thorough modern system of water-supply and drainage, were to be found quite recently the old disused privies, with pans full to overflowing, adjoining the modern water-closets. On the same premises might also be discovered long-neglected, unemptied cesspools. These facts speak for themselves.

In the appointment of inspectors the Department has been careful to pick out men rather for their methods than for their actual knowledge of sanitation. In public-health work, more than anything else, so much depends on the manner in which such knowledge is exercised for the public good. A man with much knowledge but little tact is less likely to get work done, and done cheerfully, than a man in whom the minimum of knowledge is combined with the maximum of discretion. Before definitely appointing an inspector he is required to serve for a period at headquarters on probation. His knowledge is tested, and his methods carefully observed. Should the combination prove satisfactory, he is appointed on the understanding that he passes an examination in sanitation within six months from the date of his appointment. In this manner we have been enabled to obtain the services of men who are now doing good work, and who supply the Department with knowledge of useful nature.

CERTIFICATION OF PLUMBERS.

One of not the least satisfactory results of the year's work has been the establishment of plumbers' classes in various parts of the district. That the public has at last awakened to the fact that a great deal that concerns its health and happiness is left in the hands of the plumber is in itself a favourable sign. If it is necessary to connect a dwelling by means of a dirty pipe with a dirty pipe of larger calibre, it is only right and proper that the connection should be made in the best possible manner, and that all care should be taken to prevent sewer or drain air from entering the building. The latter precaution is very often neglected, with untoward if not fatal results. A Bill for the registration of plumbers is badly wanted. In the meantime, however, many Borough Councils are insisting that none but certificated plumbers shall be registered. The plumbers them-