

I made two special investigations into the occurrence, in two places, of a number of infectious diseases.

At Invercargill, mostly in the centre of the town, a good many cases of diphtheria were reported, but beyond the fact that the locality was low-lying there was nothing to be made out as to their origin. At first sight it appeared as if the disease had been caught and spread at the district school, but closer investigation negatived that idea. In the course of this investigation some sixteen households were visited, and the local circumstances looked into.

At Kaitangata numerous cases were reported of such a doubtful nature that the doctor was puzzled to say whether he had to do with scarlet fever or German measles, or both. I went out to look at them, and while some appeared to me also to be scarlet fever, others had all the appearance of German measles. It was impossible to discriminate. Together we visited and examined more than a dozen families.

In carrying out the necessary disinfection of premises after infectious diseases, we had in two instances to meet with opposition. One of the County Clerks not only refused to undertake the disinfection of a house when notified to have it done, but actually declined to assist Inspector Gladstone, whom I sent out to do the work and to show how it should be done. I notified the Chairman of the County Council of the fact, and stated that I should be present at the next meeting of the Council to confer with them and try to put matters on a clearer footing. On taking this step, and talking over things and their duties with regard to them, we came to an understanding. In the other instance my Inspector was refused admittance to a house from which a case of diphtheria had been removed to the Hospital, but the man ultimately yielded when it was made clear to him that the consequences might be serious if he still persisted in his refusal to allow the disinfection to be carried out.

Disinfection of premises, &c., is now being carried on, frequently under the personal supervision of my Inspectors, by the local authorities, who generally employ a man who has been instructed in the details by one or other of my assistants.

In Dunedin, in which Caversham and South Dunedin are now comprised, Local Inspector Donaldson undertakes this work; at Invercargill a man has been trained by Inspector Cameron for the duty in that town and for Southland County, while many of my counties have men who have been shown our methods and who carry out this work pretty satisfactorily. In fact, this is being gradually better and better attended to and few of the cases escape our attention.

In this we shall be materially assisted by the notification of deaths by the Registrars, especially in the country districts. But it is to be desired that all deaths should be notified to the Registrars by medical men more promptly—say, within three days—so that we also should have earlier notice for disinfection purposes.

SICKNESS IN A MILITARY CAMP.

In November my attention was called to the fact that several of the men in camp at Tahuna Park were suffering from severe diarrhœa. I went out at once, and found that much of the meat being served to them was in such a condition that it was unfit for consumption and dangerous. The sausages were so rotten that they had in many cases burst their skins, and some of the mutton was quite green, smelling badly. I ordered the bad stuff to be covered with tar and burnt at the camp, having summoned Lieut.-Colonel de Lautour, the medical officer in military charge of the district, who immediately joined me and concurred in my action. And I reported the matter to Colonel Robin, who has the military charge of the district.

TOWNS INSPECTED.

The work of minute inspection of the towns in my district has been proceeded with during the year, the following places having received house-to-house visitation: Milton, Palmerston South, Queenstown, Tapanui, Arrowtown, Cromwell, Ranfurly, Clyde, Ophir, Naseby, Roxburgh, and Riverton, besides parts of the suburban boroughs of Invercargill and Dunedin.

Milton.

Some 249 premises were inspected, and of these eighty-five were faulty in some respect.

The sewers are of too flat a gradient to clean themselves, and will sooner or later require some system for flushing them periodically.

The water-supply, mostly from roof tanks or shallow wells, is not satisfactory, and an efficient water scheme is much required; but as it will be a costly undertaking, the small community is not able to undertake it for some time.

Nightsoil service is done by a borough contractor, with a monthly service, the material being buried in a paddock some miles away from the town and remote from habitations, the paddock being well fenced in and protected from cattle, &c.

House-drains have been in many instances looked to, and relaid with properly jointed flanged pipes.

Butchers', bakers', provision, and milk shops have been looked to, and are now well kept; while cow-byres, stables, and piggeries have been cleaned out and generally put in order.

The cemetery is situated on rising ground about two miles from the town.

Palmerston South.

This town contains about 193 dwellings which were inspected, a fair amount of faults being discovered.

There are two sewers in the town, but the main portion of the drainage is conveyed into a creek flowing through the town. This has been recently cleaned out, straightened, and its gradient improved. But the place will require a proper system of drainage sooner or later.