

HABITATIONS.

During the year twenty-two condemnation certificates were issued, distributed as follows:—

Locality.	Houses.	Stables.	Outbuildings.	Bakeries.	Totals.
Inglewood	...	1	1	...	2
Stratford	...	1	...	...	1
Wellington	5	2	1	1	9
Petone	3	...	...	...	3
Carterton	2	...	...	...	2
Otaki	2	...	...	...	2
Martinborough	1	...	...	...	1
Marton	1	...	...	...	1
Turakina	1	...	...	...	1
Total	15	4	2	1	22

In last year's report was pointed out the unsatisfactory state of the law, which did not give District Health Officers power to condemn timber, however rotten and insanitary, about to be used for building purposes until it was actually part of an erected house, and then only by condemning the house itself. Cases were constantly cropping up of old and dilapidated buildings being pulled down in the city and removed to the suburbs for re-erection. By section 7 of "The Public Health Act Amendment Act, 1907," the local authority, in whose district the building is about to be re-erected with the removed timber, is given power to withhold its consent. By this means the person responsible for moving the timber commits a breach of the Act, and incurs a heavy penalty. The new section will be a boon to local authorities and District Health Officers alike.

SUPPLY OF POTABLE WATER.

It is to be noted that in our Public Health Act there is nothing to correspond with the provision as to water-supply contained in the Home Public Health Act of 1875. Section 70 thereof reads,—

"On the representation of *any person* to any local authority that within their district the water in any well, tank, or cistern, public or private, or supplied from any public pump, and used or likely to be used by man for drinking or domestic purposes, or for manufacturing drinks for the use of man, is so polluted as to be injurious to health, such authority may apply to a Court of summary jurisdiction for an order to remedy the same; and thereupon such Court shall summon the *owner* or *occupier* of the premises to which the well, tank, or cistern belongs if it be private, and, in the case of a public well, tank, cistern, or pump, any person alleged in the application to be interested in the same, and may either dismiss the application, or may make an order directing the well, tank, cistern, or pump to be permanently or temporarily closed, or the water to be used for certain purposes only, or such other order as may appear to them to be requisite to prevent injury to the health of persons drinking the water. . . ."

Again, the Public Health (Water) Act of 1878—an amendment of the above Act—gives extended powers in this important direction. Section 3 reads,—

"It shall be the duty of every rural sanitary authority, regard being had to the provisions in this Act contained, to see that every occupied dwellinghouse within their district has within a reasonable distance an available supply of wholesome water sufficient for the consumption and use for domestic purposes of the inmates of the house."

In Shannon complaint was made of much undefined illness in a certain area. The water-supply was suspected. Three samples were taken:—No. 1: Well about 20 ft. deep; washhouse and box drain 3 ft. from well. No. 2: Well about 20 ft. deep; 18 ft. from pan closet. No. 3: Well 17 ft. deep; 20 ft. from pan closet.

The Colonial Analyst (Dr. Maclaurin) concluded the details of the separate analyses with this report: "The very high results for chlorine, nitrates, and solids in No. 1 show that it is a contaminated water, and while the comparatively small amount of albuminoid ammonia proves that this contamination is not of the most dangerous kind, the water may at any time become unsafe for human consumption, and should therefore not be used for such purposes. No serious objection can be taken to No. 2 water, although the chlorine appears to be high for the locality. No. 3 is bad water, unfit for potable purposes."

In Martinborough an epidemic of enteric fever is apparently associated with polluted well-waters.

Under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act of last session water is included in the definition of "food," but, as it could not be said that it was "sold" in the instances above referred to, no action under this Act was possible. Briefly, then, the position is this: There is no power to require a dwellinghouse to be supplied with pure water; there is no definition of "pure water" in any Act; there is no power to prevent any water-supply being used, even though it may be found to contain typhoid bacilli, or be reasonably suspected of causing enteric fever; there is no provision requiring a local authority to have a certificate of purity of any supply it intends adopting for its ratepayers; there is no power to require a local authority to enter upon remedial measures to prevent even obvious and serious contamination of its water-supply. All these factors need immediate attention, and, as directed by you, I have in preparation suggestions for the amendment of the Public Health Act which will, I trust, suitably meet each particular phase.