

SOCIAL HYGIENE ACT.

Prevention and Treatment of Contagious Diseases.

The Social Hygiene Act has been found in its present form to be insufficient to give effect to its full intentions. In carrying out as far as possible the spirit of the Act the selection and appointment of health patrols is proceeding, and a new confidential branch of the Department has been established under a medical officer who has had considerable experience in venereal diseases in connection with troops overseas. The object is to establish clinics and give treatment at all hospitals throughout New Zealand for civilians as well as soldiers suffering from venereal diseases. A careful record of the movements of every soldier so afflicted is kept after his discharge from the Forces, but everything is done without ostentation or publicity in any way, so that all sufferers in the community may be encouraged and helped.

POISONS ACT.

This Act requires some amendment, and the necessary points are being assembled with this view.

PLUMBERS REGISTRATION ACT.

Three meetings of the Plumbers Board constituted under the Act were held during the year.

The Board held examinations under the Act in July and December, 1918. Fifty-nine candidates presented themselves, the results being as follows: Fifteen candidates qualified in the theoretical part and thirteen in the practical part. As a result of this sixteen new names were placed on the register, the persons concerned having qualified or completed in both parts of the examination. In addition, one other plumber was admitted to registration during the year under section 7 (1) (c) of the Act.

At the end of the year 1,270 names had been entered in the register since the commencement of the Act. Out of this total thirty-one names have been removed—eighteen through death in ordinary civil life, and thirteen through death on active service.

With the demobilization of the troops a great many late applications for the annual certificate or "ticket" have been made for the current year. There is also evidence of increased attention to the Board's examinations, and the figures respecting candidates being dealt with during the current year will show a marked increase on the year under review.

The Department has recently issued in booklet form a "Guide for Sanitary Plumbing," containing a copy of the Act and its regulations, also suggested answers to questions set in the Board's examinations. The answers were compiled gratuitously by Mr. John Clark, of Auckland, a registered journeyman plumber and a recognized master in his craft. The thanks of the Department are due to Mr. Clark, to whom I note you have already expressed your appreciation.

STAFF.

I regret that my report has to record the sad loss the Department has suffered during the epidemic from the deaths of Dr. Pollen, Port Health Officer, Wellington; Dr. O'Sullivan, Assistant District Health Officer, Auckland, who had recently joined our Department and who had shown promise of great ability; and of Dr. Henly, Port Health Officer, Napier, another medical officer who lost his life in the service of the public. To the relatives of these officers the Department extends their sincere condolences.

Owing to the absence on military duty of Dr. Makgill and myself a very undue amount of work fell on Dr. Frengley, to whose exceptional ability we owe it that the Department was able to carry on during a very busy year. During the earlier stages of the epidemic, when he was detained at Auckland and Dr. Watt was incapacitated by influenza, the burden of work at Head Office fell on Miss Maclean, Assistant Inspector of Hospitals, and her assistant, Miss Bicknell. Special praise is due to the heroism of these ladies in carrying out the organization of measures to combat the epidemic, working thereat ceaselessly night and day without thought to their personal comfort or safety. It is not possible to estimate the measure of indebtedness which the Dominion owes to their self-sacrificing devotion.

The Departmental staff generally, short-handed and depleted by sickness as they were, rose splendidly to the occasion, and undertook readily any duty which presented itself as being needful of accomplishment, working thereat long hours and often at considerable personal risks. The Department generally has had many criticisms hurled at it, so it is but fair that the other side of the picture should be placed before the public.

REPORTS ATTACHED.

I attach hereto a report by the Secretary, Mr. E. Killick, on the financial workings of the Department, making special reference to the influenza-epidemic expenditure. The report of the Assistant Inspector of Hospitals and Deputy Registrar of Nurses, Miss H. Maclean, is also attached.

I also enclose a report by the Acting Government Bacteriologist, Major T. R. Ritchie, M.B., Ch.B., on the work done in the Wellington Laboratory.

I have, &c.,

T. H. A. VALINTINE,

Inspector-General of Hospitals and Chief Health Officer.