

INTERIM REPORT.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

The Honourable the Minister of Public Health has on 11th April advised us that indications point to something in the nature of a recrudescence of the recent epidemic, and has suggested that, if possible, our report under the terms of our Commission should be forwarded to Your Excellency as soon as possible, in order that any suggestions which we may make for future epidemics may be immediately available.

As we have only recently finished taking evidence under our Commission it is impossible for us to submit to Your Excellency our complete report. We have, however, thought it right to submit at once the following interim report on the second subject-matter under our order of reference—"The best methods of preventing or dealing with such occurrence in the future"—in order that, should Your Excellency think fit, any of the suggestions in such report may be brought to the notice of the authorities interested therein.

When early in October the explosive outbreak in Auckland brought home to the Dominion the fact that it had to face the pandemic influenza which had wrought so much havoc on the other side of the world there was naturally a considerable degree of unreadiness, and, consequently, of confusion and overlapping among the authorities, the medical profession, and the general public. Later on, with the co-operation of all public bodies and of the great majority of individual citizens, there were created organized methods for dealing with the epidemic, to the details of which we shall later refer. The main features of this organization remain, and would be at once available in the not improbable event of the recurrence of the epidemic. Among their functions was the compilation and distribution of information of the nature and character of the disease, and, to use the words of our order of reference, "The best methods of preventing or dealing with such occurrence in the future."

MEDICAL ADVICE.

At the date of the epidemic the Dominion had not the benefit of the experiences of the English medical men with this pandemic outbreak. Since then such has been supplied. A memorandum on the subject was issued by the Royal College of Physicians, London, in November last. Much of its subject-matter is familiar to our own practitioners, and has been adopted by them in the various directions and notices issued during the epidemic campaign. It may be well, however, to embody its main suggestions:—

"Infection is conveyed from the sick to the healthy by the secretions of the respiratory surface. In coughing, sneezing, and even in loud talking these are transmitted through the air for considerable distances in the form of a fine spray. The channels of reception are normally the nose and throat.

"It is manifest that the closer the contact the more readily will this transmission occur; hence the paramount importance of avoiding overcrowding and thronging of any sort, whether in places of public resort, public conveyances, factories, camps, dwelling-rooms, or dormitories.

"The sum of available evidence favours the belief that the period of incubation is about forty-eight hours, or even somewhat less.

"The dangers of influenza are gravely increased by the complications, and much can be done to avoid or to mitigate these. Such complications may develop insidiously and without previous signs of severe illness.

"Carefulness does undoubtedly decrease, and carelessness increase, both morbidity and mortality; it is important, therefore, that the public should have a clear idea of such measures of personal prophylaxis as are available against infection. Larger measures of public health administered by the Government