

the figures obtained are of no statistical value. The local interest of two of the Grey Lynn cases is dependent upon the fact that the house in question was situated in close proximity to the Auckland Sanitary Company's depot, and in the line of the prevailing wind. This depot has now been abolished.

PTOMAINÉ POISONING.

On the 30th December I was advised "of the many cases of ptomaine poisoning of visitors and others who lunched at the stewards' and adjoining booth" at the Auckland Agricultural Show, held on the 28th of the previous month. My informant was the husband of one of the partakers of lunch thereat, who had been seriously ill for over a month. At such a late date investigation was of little use. The police had no knowledge of the occurrence. What results were obtainable tended to show that a very large number of the persons concerned had suffered from more or less severe diarrhœa subsequent to the show. An effort to locate the infected articles of food was unsuccessful.

LOCAL SANITATION.

Auckland City.

Concerning the 160 houses declared unfit for habitation, *vide* last report, 59 certificates were issued requiring that they be pulled down. 22 of that number have been thus treated. Many others included in the 160 have been demolished by their owners without further action on the part of the Department, as a consequence of the publicity given to their condition by Dr. Makgill's reports. There is a regrettable delay in enforcing the requirements of the Act against those persons who are defiant or unwilling to remove their dilapidated and insanitary buildings—much too frequent features of Auckland City. The answer to my letters on the subject always concluded to the effect that the matter is being placed in the hands of the City Solicitor. The real cause of the corporation's hesitation would seem to be a fear to enter upon the matter of the housing of the less fortunate in a whole-hearted and systematic manner, whatever the solution of the problem may be. Happily the advent and convenience of the electric tramway service has solved some features of the housing question without awaiting the slow awakening of vigorous action by the Council. Undoubtedly, and for reasons set forth in previous reports, it is advisable that the demolition of these landmarks of Auckland's past indifference to the want of decent habitations for her poorer classes should not be instantaneous in fulfilment; yet it is quite impossible to contend that the need for houses at reasonable rentals is a sufficient argument for the perpetuation of dilapidated hovels. This is the plea of at least one well-to-do owner of a bundle of four of these unhealthy homes, condemned by the Council but still marked "nothing done." One cannot help thinking that if the term "unfit for habitation" concerned the housing of some pampered poodle, its eloquence would appeal to many more than when poor, oft non-erring, humanity is at stake.

Early in the year a new contract was let for the removal of nightsoil from the city. A sealed-pan service was required. The implied intention of the early negotiations upon the disposal of the collected material was that the pans and contents were to be taken by steamer to Harkin's Point, below Riverhead, in the Waitemata County, and there all excreta were to be passed through a desiccator, by which a manurial poudrette was to be obtained. This has not been done—so-called disposal by ploughing into the land is supposed to be carried out. The contractor has admitted and has been prosecuted for tipping the pan-contents into the Auckland Harbour. Stringent conditions were entered in the Council's contract. Nine months almost have passed, and yet the contractor has not fulfilled these conditions in their entirety, how much has really been done properly it is hard to tell. If the old contract was "indescribably bad" it is to be hoped that the present is not appreciably worse. That the pans were to be cleansed by steaming is a condition of the contract, but the plant for doing so has not even been erected. I have in a report to the Council described their action as "lenient." It is the least that may be said, yet it was indignantly resented. The concluding lines of last year's report seem almost prophetic, " . . . so that if this service becomes as bad as the former one it will be through criminal neglect on the part of the Council to enforce those conditions." The Council have threatened to, but have not yet enforced the full conditions.

That the Council should have been guided by this Department and not have let the removal of nightsoil to a contractor is well exemplified by the satisfactory result of the inauguration of a rubbish-removal service conducted by their own officials. Had the destructor been available, the essential triad of a modern scavenging service would have been put in hand at once—proper rubbish-receptacles, covered collecting-carts, destruction by fire. The necessary carts have been provided. A destructor was advocated by this Department four years ago; it is not yet completed, and will not likely be in working-order before the spring of this year.

The disposal of the collected refuse was a matter of difficulty. My consent was sought for many sites within the city; subsequent history showed that refusal was justified, for at a late date the use of the least objectionable of these, that at the bottom of Grafton Road, was stopped by a Supreme Court injunction, which citizens were compelled to obtain against the City Council. The only site that could be consented to was on a future road-line, on railway property, in Mechanic's Bay, and under strict conditions as to covering and manner of depositing the rubbish. For a time all went well, but as the "tip" extended, and its weight increased, the unforeseen squeezing of "Thames mud" gases from the sewage accumulated for forty or more years past in the bed of the bay rendered it impossible to do otherwise than recommend that the rubbish be taken out to sea. The Council accepted the advantage of the obvious weakness of section 53 *et seq.* of the Public Health Act of 1900, and only after much popular indignation was aroused did that recommendation receive fulfilment. Conveyance to and dumping beyond harbour limits is to be continued in operation till the destructor is in working-order. Its expense is its only objectionable feature.