

when it is on record in this office that during the past six months five loads of bedding were attempted to be properly disinfected by sulphur-fumes in an old police cell, the openings of which were stopped by paper pasted over them. This disinfection, or attempted disinfection, was required to prevent the spread of ringworm in a certain institution." In view of the general tendency in sanitary matters, of which indeed this report must unavoidably be one continuing reiteration, I was not surprised to learn that the Council were satisfied with the present means of disinfection, which I admit are the best possible with the poor facilities at hand, but certainly unworthy of a place of Auckland's importance. The reply of the Council was as follows: "In view of this fact the Council do not consider it necessary to erect a building and provide a disinfector plant." Are then the things which other towns worry themselves about—the relative advantages of saturated, current, and superheated steam for disinfection purposes—mere useless figments?

The third part of the rubbish service also received my attention. I recommended and endeavoured to obtain the Council's co-operation in defining a "sufficient" dust-bin, with a view to uniformity; a great factor in effecting a clean and easily conducted system. A by-law was passed—without consulting me, needless to say—under which an old iron cooking-utensil will pass. It need not be water-tight provided the leak is not so large as to allow "matter of any kind to soak therefrom so as to be injurious or dangerous to health, or so as to cause an offensive smell." It will be "sufficient and suitable"—the words in the by-law—provided it is so to its owner, the by-law does not say it should be suitable in the opinion of any one in particular, and it will be covered with a lid.

Rubbish collection: At first the carts in use were covered. In January I drew attention to the fact that the covers had disappeared, and I evidently must continue to see them so "pending the procuring of a more workable one which he—the Engineer has in hand." Already months have passed, and the carts appear in all their nakedness and nauseousness, sifting particles about the streets.

As will be seen below, the suburban bodies have freely made use of the powers given them under the Public Health Act to insure plenty of open-air space and incidentally prevent overcrowding. Auckland City, on the other hand, has taken the retrograde step of reducing by by-law the distance necessary between buildings from 8 ft. to 4 ft. The by-law in question is of course really a fire-prevention by-law. Many amendments would, however, have been feasible without actually encouraging—as the new 4 ft. limit—the overcrowding of houses and the inroads of the speculator and jerry-builder. Is it any wonder the outside local bodies are so chary of joining the city? It was pleaded that the working-man could not build on a small section in view of this 8 ft. rule. I am not aware of any evidence being brought forward as to how many genuine working-men held these sections.

The abattoir problem has been advanced another step by the selection of a site next Hellaby's Freezing Company's works at Otahuhu, and plans are in course of preparation.

At the request of the Council, Mr. Midgley Taylor has reported upon Mr. Mestayer's scheme and submitted an alternative sewerage scheme for Auckland. Briefly, this is to connect all the existing sewers to a main intercepting sewer following roughly the beach-contour, this latter to terminate in a balancing-tank situated at Okahu Point, the sewerage therefrom to be discharged at ebb tide. The storage-tanks would be designed to limit the discharge of sewage to the exact period which would be determined from a consideration of certain float experiments which he advises should be undertaken. One statement made in Mr. Taylor's report, however, is open to very much question. He says, "As far as we can gather from the information available the existing sewers are in fair order and generally sufficient for the purpose they have to serve." At much too frequent intervals large holes have suddenly appeared in the main streets. The facetious individual speaks of these as indicating an underground spring; leaking drains and sewers would seem a much more tenable explanation. How many house-drains which have been down for more than ten years and have been exposed for any cause during the past year would the City Engineer be prepared to pass as thoroughly sound? I think Mr. Wrigg's answer would be found to be nearer none than some. If this be so for the house-drains, it is difficult to imagine that the main drains and sewers can be in "fair order."

In pursuance of the sections of the amending Act of 1904 relating to morgues, I have advised the City Council upon the need for a proper morgue, containing a *post-mortem* room, mortuary, Coroner's inquest room, waiting-room, and accessories. Plans are in course of preparation. The site selected and approved is at the corner of Union and Patteson Streets. On this section also stands the destructor. It is likely the surrounding boroughs will be asked to contribute in accordance with the provisions of the Act. In my report I referred also to the desirability of erecting a crematorium. During the year a Cremation Society has been formed in Auckland, and at their request I have written the following for the pamphlet issued by them—"What is it we fear in regard to our unburied and buried dead? Is it not that the answer entirely lies within the pale of the interests of the public health? We fear that perchance our unburied or buried dead may be a source of danger to the health and welfare of our living. It will be admitted this danger can be present. What constitutes any such danger? One word, infection, and the thought is with us that this infection may spread from our buried dead. Disinfection signifies the destruction of infection—of infectious or disease-producing material—and the process may be natural or artificial. Nature employs numerous living organisms as her agent in effecting disinfecting processes; her methods are complex beyond the reasoning or knowledge of present-day *savants*, burdened in the case of earth-burial with a slowness or rapidity dependent upon meteorological conditions, and the chemical, physical, and bacteriological content of the soil in which the body is buried, and *en fin* only insuring a certainty of completion dependent upon these immeasurable, indefinite, and uncontrollable conditions, consequently always implying to the living an ever-existing risk that ultimate disinfection may not in years, if ever, be reached. Fire is a natural phenomenon. Man for all time has regarded fire as the most effective means of destroying what, even in his most untutored state, he regarded as noxious or offensive. By the cremation of our dead we but employ what common knowledge, what scientific investigation, regards as our simplest and most rapid way of insuring the destruction of infection, and that, too, with a tangible certainty of safeguarding the health of our living."