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## Editorial Comment

### Town- Planning and Slums.

The old saying that it is an ill-wind which blows no good to anyone is applicable to the recent influenza epidemic, for there seems to be a fair indication that, as a result of the sickness, the matters of the scientific planning of towns and town districts, and the building of sanitary homes are to have more attention paid to them than their value as mere vote-catching propaganda would warrant. The fact that slums do exist in New Zealand has caused some astonishment in many quarters; and, on the other hand, the fact that certain places, usually regarded as slums, have escaped the epidemic has astounded other sections of the community. The position is, in reality, that very few people know what a slum is, and this point is the pivot upon which turns the whole success, or otherwise, of town planning schemes. The dictionary derivation of the word "slum" is that it comes from the Danish word "slam," meaning "mire"; while its meaning is given as "the back street of a city, especially one filled with a poor, dirty and vicious population." There is nothing in this to indicate that houses of a slum must necessarily be old; quite new houses will be found in city slums, and a single new house, with the latest appointments in modern hygiene may, through overcrowding and accumulated dirt become a slum. Since the epidemic ran through New Zealand, illustrated papers in the Dominion have published photographs of alleged slums, in which the houses invariably appear to be old. That age tends to create slums by the lower rents charged for old houses attracting improvident and slovenly people is a fact, but more discretion than has been shown is needed to ensure that the plague spots of our cities are eradicated, even though they be composed of isolated houses. Town planning by providing ample air space is a powerful factor in this direction, but the strict enforcement of sanitary bylaws is necessary, even in a town-planned town—to use a colloquialism which is tautological. In short, town planning itself does not ensure the absence of slums. It is simply a grand step towards that goal.