REPORTS AND ANALYSES

AND

DESCRIPTIONS OF NEW INVENTIONS

IN MEDICINE, SURGERY, DIETETICS, AND THE ALLIED SCIENCES.

HYGIENIC TOWELETTES.

We have received from the Sanitary Wood Wool Company samples of their improved towelettes, for which it is claimed that they are turned out with greater softness and absorbing power than hitherto. These excellent towelettes might well replace the old-fashioned linen diapers, as they can be purchased at 1s. a dozen, which is about the cost of washing the ordinary diaper now used.

TEA, COFFEE, AND COCOA MEASURE.

This invention is made as a small bell-shaped cup, with divisional markings from one to four teaspoonfuls. An article such as this is much needed for the purpose of exactness to prevent these beverages being made too strong, and thus causing them to be injurious to the health and distasteful to the palate, or of being made so weak by insufficient quantity as to be not worth drinking. The measure is a great improvement on the rough and ready way now in vogue of measuring by various size teaspoons. This useful article is to be obtained at the Army and Navy Stores, Victoria Street, Westminster.

REPORT ON THE SANITARY CONDITION OF WINDSOR.

By BAILEY DENTON, M.Inst.C.E.

IN accordance with instructions from the Editor of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, I visited Windsor on October 8th and 9th with a view to report upon its sanitary and general condition.

Before describing in detail things as they are, I desire to state that in the years 1885 and 1886 considerable stir was made in the town with regard to the insanitary condition of its low-lying slums, and that public attention was drawn to the matter in the press. As a result of this publicity a deputation from the Town Council, with the borough member, waited upon Mr. Ritchie, M.P., the then President of the Local Government Board, on September 14th, 1886, and, after complaining of certain statements which had been publicly made concerning the sanitary condition of the Royal Borough, requested him to institute an inquiry on the subject through his inspectors, and promised to abide by their recommendations. As a result, Dr. Hubert Airy and Mr. Arnold Taylor, both of the Local Government Board, went down to Windsor in the October of that year to examine into the whole question, and on January 17th, 1887, issued a report.

This report, after stating that the population of the town—including the garrison of household troops, infantry and cavalry—amounted to about 12,500, acknowledged in most plain language that in the lower districts, where all the poorer dwellings erected in recent years are built, and which are situated on the alluvial plain that stretches at the foot of the western slopes of the Castle, as well as in one quarter of the older portion of the town, periodical floods occurred, with the result not only that great temporary inconvenience was caused, but that a most unwholesome state of things ensued.

The inspectors examined the numerous courts and alleys between the river and the main street, giving as a result their opinion that their condition was "still pitifully bad." The following places came under their immediate notice, and are described in detail in the report: Bier Lane, Garden Court, Collins's Buildings, South Place, Charles Place, Keppel Row, and Keppel Court.

After passing in review these unhealthy and overcrowded districts, they next called attention to the fact that in many instances the house drains throughout the town were ill-laid and unventilated. That the waterclosets were frequently un-

flushed. That there existed no means of burning the house refuse, and that, as a result, it all had to be carted away to a field about a mile from the centre of the town, where it was used to fill up hollows, and created an offensive smell. That there was no hospital for the isolation of infectious diseases. And, lastly, that the sanitary staff of the borough was insufficient, inasmuch as the borough surveyor not only acted in that capacity, but was inspector of common lodging houses, weights and measures, petroleum, and canal boats.

The inspectors after expressing an opinion that some allowance should be made for the difficulties besetting sanitary authorities in their endeavours to amend the faulty state of things existing in all old towns like Windsor, and which have been inherited from bygone centuries, finally recommended: (1) That the sanitary defects existing in the low-lying slums should be remedied under the powers given to the Borough Council under the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvements Acts, 1875-82; (2) that they should appoint a separate inspector of nuisances; (3) that they should provide a hospital for the treatment of infectious diseases; and (4) that they should build a furnace for the destruction of house refuse.

It may be presumed that Mr. Ritchie, on receipt of this report, was not content to leave things as they were, for he instructed the same inspectors to revisit Windsor and again report to him, which they did on November 20th, 1889; and the contents of their second report, which is under date January 23rd, 1890, may be thus fairly summarised.

They found that a few of the most disreputable houses in several of the numerous courts had been pulled down, and that there was generally an increased watercloset accommodation: but that practically the courts and slums were only in a slightly better condition than on their previous inspection, and that certainly the Town Council had taken no notice of their advice that they, as the Urban Sanitary Authority, should make use of their legal rights, and remove most, if not all, of the evils complained of. They observed that a separate nuisance inspector had been appointed, and therefore expressed the hope that there would be improvement with regard to the slums in the immediate future. They, however, again drew the attention of the Local Government Board to the fact that, although nearly three years had elapsed since their first report, there was still no hospital for the isolation of infectious diseases; and that no refuse destructor had been built. In their closing paragraphs they announced that the Mayor had informed them that it was in contemplation to construct a new riverside road and promenade, which would not only greatly beautify the town, but would remove some of the insanitary courts abutting on River Street.

I now come to the condition of the town in October, 1895. It will, I think, be generally conceded that as a Royal Borough, to which in consequence visitors and foreigners constantly flock, the condition of Windsor should be, if anything, better than that of other towns, and certainly that within its limits there should be no evidence of continued and needless neglect.

I propose to treat the various points brought under my notice under the following heads:

There are no public baths and wash-houses. This will hardly be credited when the large number of resident poor is taken into consideration, who must find it most difficult, especially in times of flood and frost, to have recourse to any methods of cleanliness.

No hospital for the isolation of infectious diseases has been built, although the provision of one was strongly recommended in both reports of the Local Government Board in 1887 and 1890.

Slaughterhouses are still in use in the principal thoroughfares of the town, so that sheep and cattle can be seen being led to the slaughter from the very residence of the Sovereign.

No new road and river-side promenade has been made, as foreshadowed by the Mayor in 1890. Why this long needed improvement has not been carried out it is difficult to say, but it is rumoured that some of the Corporation are afraid that a handsome new street, adjacent to the river, would remove the business of the town away from High Street and

Thames Street, where the principal old-established shops are situated.

The condition of the streets is lamentable. The surface of the granite cubes—for example, in Peascod Street—is needlessly uneven and injurious to carriage traffic, whilst all the main thoroughfares are badly kerbed and channelled. The macadamised roads also are equally neglected, and after rain pools of water remain on them for days, thus creating an unnecessarily humid atmosphere. Grass is allowed to grow in several of the roads—for example, round Trinity Church—in a way which I have never seen equalled in any English town of a similar size. The pavements likewise, even round the Castle, are in a disgraceful condition.

Royal Windsor is approached from the river above Windsor Bridge either by River Street or by Goswell Road. The traveller, on landing from his boat at River Street, is immediately confronted on his left by a huge wooden dustbin, full of filth, measuring 6 ft 6 ins. by 3 ft., and on his right by tumbledown houses let in tenements, whilst in front of him is a steep narrow street ending in a slaughter-house, immediately under the Castle walls. Should he elect to reach the town by Goswell Road he will land near about twelve heaps of rubbish and brick dust. Beyond this his route lies along a dirty road, with inferior cottages on the left, until he reaches the Great Western railway viaduct, where, should he desire to pass by a near way to the booking office, he will go through an arch, the roadway under which is covered with manure and rubbish. Arrived at the top of the hill, or, in other words, at the Great Western station, he will stand between two approach (or rather reproach) roads, the condition and width of which would be a disgrace to any important town in the country.

I will now refer to the appearance and condition of the houses.

As to those inhabited by the wealthier class, it is obvious that, as a rule, the outside sanitary arrangements are defective. The soil pipes are mostly ill-ventilated, whilst the rain-water pipes in many instances are leaky; in fact I do not believe that there are many houses in the borough which would successfully stand a modern sanitary test. A general appearance of neglect predominates throughout, and in one road which I could name there are sixteen empty houses within a distance of 800 yards. On inspecting one, which was provided with a large brick dustbin close to the lawn in the back garden, I was told by the caretaker that, though it had been built nineteen years, it had only been inhabited for three; he added that the reason was that the smells of the adjacent open ditch were intolerable in summertime. Why the Town Council have not covered this ditch over he did not know.

As to the condition of the poorer dwellings in the low-lying districts, considering the advance made in sanitary science during the last ten years, they practically remain as they were. Amongst the most noted slums which I inspected were South Place, Collins's Buildings, Haines Court, Love Lane, and Garden Court. In South Place most of the houses contain only two small rooms, with one watercloset situated outside and used jointly by two dwellings. These water-closets are in nearly every instance worn out and in a filthy condition. They are supplied with water (an improvement on 1886) from a waste-preventing cistern above them, which is in every instance unprotected from frost, the consequence being that during the cold weather, when a good flush is essentially necessary, no water can possibly be obtained. There are a few taps off the public water mains in the back yards from which the people can obtain water, except in lengthened frosts, but the public supply is in no case carried into the houses. There is no sink accommodation beyond one or two outside gulleys in the back yard common to the whole court; whilst the inhabitants of the houses on the south side of the court, who have no backyards of their own, are obliged still to cross the road to the yard at the back of the houses on the north side in order to use the waterclosets.

In Collins's Buildings, which are four-roomed houses, let at rentals of 3s. 6d. per week, the flood last November rose to 3 feet above the ground floor level, and as a consequence signs of decay and damp are still everywhere apparent. The water-closets, gulleys, and water supply are practically in the same position and condition as in South Place. The same remarks

apply to Haines Court and Garden Court. The worst and filthiest slum of all, however, is Wellington Square, Love Lane, which is surrounded by two- and four-roomed houses, with an unpaved surface in the centre covered with filth, with a few waterclosets and old washhouses on either side falling to pieces. In all the courts are large worn-out dustbins, which are only emptied once a week, and which at times, between the periods of removal, must emit most noxious odours.

Is Windsor worse than other towns? My reply, after a certain amount of experience, is decidedly Yes. What, then, are some of the remedies? If in 1886 the Local Government Board inspectors pointed out that there were in existence Acts of Parliament which would enable the Town Council to do away with the above disgraceful slums, still more so are there now, after the passing of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, which provides that local authorities may carry out improvement schemes for the rearrangement and reconstruction of the streets and houses within their jurisdiction. There is therefore ample legal machinery at command if only it is set in motion. Each house should be provided with a separate watercloset, and an indoor sink and water tap. The huge and nauseous dustbins should be done away with, and small galvanised iron dustbins substituted, the contents of which should be frequently removed and burnt in a destructor. An isolation hospital and public baths should be immediately built. The slaughterhouses should be removed to less objectionable sites. The sanitation of the houses of the wealthier classes should be more looked after, and all necessary modern requirements where possible insisted on; whilst the roads should be properly paved and channelled; and last, though not least, the approaches from the river should be improved.

It will probably be asked whether the annual death-rate in Windsor is so excessive as to justify this all-round censure. My answer to such a question is that the details of a death-rate are entirely outside my province. There are, however, many things in this life much more to be feared than death, amongst which may be mentioned uncleanness and degrading vice, and neither of these evils runs much chance of being eradicated at Windsor if things are allowed to remain as they now are in the Royal Borough. No good will be done by blaming officials, so long as they remain servants of the local authority and not of the State, and who therefore frequently are afraid to speak their mind. On the contrary, the remedy rests entirely with the Borough Council, and it is for them to act without delay.

FACTORY AND WORKSHOP INSPECTION.

The report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1894 reached our hands a few weeks since. It forms a considerable volume of over 500 pages, and contains a mass of facts respecting our great industries and also our smaller ones, and workshops. It tells of perpetual industrial progress, and affords numerous particulars which show the condition of those engaged in them, and makes besides many suggestions for improvements.

The extension of the Factory Acts, and particularly the passing into law of the Workshops Bill, have immensely enlarged the business of the Factory Department of the Home Office. The report before us proves the necessity for, and the wisdom of the extension brought about. In fact, it goes much further than this, for it brings to light the need of still further extension, of the existence of legislative omissions and anomalies to be remedied, the necessity for amendment and revision, and generally of an improved administrative organisation.

The institution of a class of lady inspectors by the former Home Secretary, Mr. Asquith, has proved a success, as indicated by the work done. The ladies exhibit great interest and energy in their duties, not devoid of the ambition to have additional work entrusted to them, and to render their position still more important than it is.

As a matter of courtesy doubtless the chief inspector, acting on the maxim of "ladies first," accords to the reports of the lady inspectors the first place. The call for women inspectors was made in the interests of female workers, who, presumably, were imagined to be reticent in making complaints or in meeting the inquisitiveness of male officers.