

With a brush which he alone could wield Dickens painted the crowded streets of the poor parts of London, with their squalor, dirt, drunkenness, and crime, and he traced a close connection between the latter and the former. To say that the one is consequent in a great measure upon the other, is but to restate the long-accepted scientific fact that the life of every animal is nothing more than an expression of the fight with its environment. Pointing to the model buildings which through the energy of certain individuals had replaced the squalid overcrowded slums, he declared them greater monuments "than storied urn or animated bust." That we are far from free of reproach is evident from Dr. Makgill's report of last year and the columns of the *Auckland Herald* in January last. The depth and frontage of "building sections" should be set out by all towns no matter how small, and houses should not be permitted to be erected unless in the opinion of competent sanitarians the area of land is sufficient. The larger towns and cities have all passed such by-laws, but some of them unfortunately waited until crowded areas have been created. The task is easy for our budding Wellingtons and Aucklands of the future if they but seise themselves of the importance of requiring adequate areas for all dwelling-houses and wait not till a mayor is entitled to preside over their councils.

#### SMOKE NUISANCE.

This is a matter which, in Wellington, at any rate, has been the subject of much discussion, and which has been carefully gone into during the past year and a half by the Department. Data have been obtained from most of the large centres in the Old Country and from America.

In this as in many other things there are two sides to the shield. That the emission of smoke from the factory and other chimneys is not only undesirable, but in a measure antagonistic to health will be admitted by most, but it is when we come to suggest a remedy that the difficulty begins. Any measure for the mitigation of this nuisance must, it will be admitted, be general in its application. No specific industry or manufacturer must be singled out for the pillory. It is a well-accepted fact among engineers and sanitarians that much of the smoke now belched forth in our cities could be obviated by greater care in the stoking, but firemen like unto the rest of humanity are liable to follow what they consider the line of least resistance. If it could be demonstrated that there was any apparatus applicable to all furnaces which when used would effectually prevent the sending-out of smoke, then law and common justice would justify our insistence upon its use, but it would seem from a very extensive investigation that no such "cure-all" is obtainable. There are, however, two ways in which this question might be settled: (1) Require all factories to be located within a specified area—set apart a locality in each large centre for manufacturing purposes, and give the builders of such works some security from interference; or (2) follow the rule adopted by such cities as Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and London, and say that only for so many minutes per hour may black and brown smoke be emitted from the chimneys of factories.

In a previous report to you I advocated the relegation of all trades scheduled as noxious under the Public Health Act to one defined area, so that manufacturers settling within that area should, as far as the Government could, be assured that if the works were conducted properly they would not be subjected to actions for annoyance or unavoidable nuisance which might result from the carrying-on of their specific industries.

#### SCARLET FEVER.

The wave of scarlet fever which swept from one end of the colony to the other last year has, I am glad to say, subsided. It would seem that all suitable victims have been attacked. It is more than likely that until a new generation has arisen we shall be free from any such wholesale outbreak. We must, however, if we hope to check any fresh inroad, be prepared to isolate the primary cases in each large centre. Once an epidemic has set in it is hopeless to expect much from isolation. It is the first cases we must concentrate our attention upon. To arrange hospital accommodation for all who suffer during an epidemic is an hopeless task, and I venture to say an economic mistake. Provision, however, should assuredly be made in each large centre for a certain number of cases, so that patients connected with houses having to do with the supply of food-stuffs such as milk may be at once removed and isolated. More important from an economic even than a personal point of view is this necessary. Take a case from actual practice and see what want of hospital accommodation entails. A milk-vendor with six cows in full profit has a family of wife, son, two girls who work in a ready-made clothing-factory, and a young child. He lives in a small house of three rooms, one of which is used as a shop. The child suffers from scarlet fever, and there is no room in the infectious diseases hospital: what results? Through our inability to remove the child, the sale of milk is stopped: the employers of the girls rightly object to their continuing their work, and if the father be poor, the whole family has practically to be maintained by the Charitable Aid Board. The non-provision of an isolation hospital for this one child has thrown the keep of six persons upon the rates: this, as can easily be seen, is false economy. I am glad to say that adequate provision is gradually being made for this and other infectious diseases.