CONFERENCE OF INSPECTORS OF NUISANCES.

ADDRESS BY DR. A. CARPENTER.

PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE.

ABSTRACT.

Dr. CARPENTER said that he was glad that they were following in the footsteps of the Medical Officers of Health, who had met in Conference on the previous day. The founding of the Institute was the thought of men who had been instrumental in bringing to the notice of the State the wants of sanitary law, the result of which was the passing of the Act of 1848. It was his privilege to reside in a town that was in the first list of those that took advantage of that Act. The Local Board made bye-laws. After a short time they discovered that these bye-laws were dead letters, and then a Sanitary Committee was appointed, of which he had the honour to be Chairman. They made a report, and the local authority determined, in accordance with the recommendations contained in that report, to appoint inspectors to see that the bye-laws were carried out. Then came the battle. They had to face the opposition of those who objected to the appointment of Sanitary Inspectors. Owners of small houses and others felt that Sanitary Inspectors would be prying into their private affairs, and causing them much trouble; but after a time the unpopularity became dormant, and the inspectors were appointed. Then there was the disadvantage of the appointment of incompetent persons as inspectors.

He then explained that such methods of administration in various localities led to the establishment of the Sanitary Institute, through which properly qualified men were able to obtain certificates, showing that they were capable of doing the work which they undertook. The work done by the Institute in this way was of great value to local authorities when they were about to appoint Sanitary Inspectors, and the Institute had in consequence of that and similar actions commended itself to the public generally. Public opinion had now materially advanced in favour of sanitation, and the position of Sanitary Inspectors had greatly improved. Some people were inclined to think that the office of Sanitary Inspector or of Inspector of Nuisances was a new office, but it was no such thing. It was one of the offices in connection with hygiene that had been formed in very early times. They had only to go back to the pages of Holy Writ to prove it. Let them read Leviticus, and study the laws laid down by Moses, and they would see

that the Sanitary Inspector he appointed was one of the most important men in the state. When the sewage of a house had produced disease, the occupier was to go to the priest, who explained things, and he became the Inspector of Nuisances within the camp, or, as it was afterwards, within the cities of Israel. Therefore, they had to go to the highest authority for the foundation of their office, and the importance of their social position in connection with this office was very manifest from what was in the mind of Moses. The formation of infectious hospitals was really inaugurated by him. They would find that he appointed that infectious diseases which were there classed together under the head of leprosy should be treated by isolation without the camp. That would not be without shelter, and they might assume that hospitals were erected for their protection.

Passing on, he said that at the present time there was not a town in the kingdom where the sanitary authority was doing its duty which had not a hospital in which it could isolate cases of infectious disease as soon as they were brought to its notice.

Touching upon the manner in which the work of Sanitary Inspectors should be done, he said that there were two classes of officers. Some went with the threat of legal proceedings in their mouth, and did not attempt to explain why certain work had to be done, and if they acted in this way they set up the backs of the people, and did not get the work carried out to the satisfaction of the Authority. It was far better that people should be taught by the Sanitary Inspectors the reasons why different work had to be done, and be persuaded to carry out the principles necessary for the removal of nuisances, and so diminish the chances which lead to the spread of infectious disease. It was far better for the people to do the work willingly, and look upon the Sanitary Inspector as their friend, than as a prying, intolerant autocrat, who would force down their throats the principles of sanitation whether they liked it or not.

Referring to the pay of Sanitary Officers, he agreed that every labourer was worthy of his hire. A paper was sent to him when he was away from home with regard to compensation and mutual assurance, he hoped that the gentleman would accept his apology for omitting to cause it to be placed on the agenda. If there was time when the other papers had been disposed of it would be read. He congratulated those present on being invited by the Institute, and the Institute on inviting the Inspectors to meet in conference in the important and healthy Borough of Brighton, which he said was almost the healthiest town in the kingdom. The invite extended by the town to the

Institute reflected great credit on the town itself, the Institute and Inspectors being thought worthy of the presence of the Mayor at their meetings reflected credit upon them. Brighton was healthy, but he claimed that if they took a decade of ten years, his town, viz., Croydon, had beaten it.

Passing on, he said that he had thought it necessary in the town of Brighton to draw attention to the waste of material in regard to sewage. It was the only serious sanitary fault he found. They had magnificent waterworks and constant water supply, and the fact that the streets and poorer classes of houses were well looked after by the authorities was proved by the healthy condition of those classes, and the absence of mischievous disease from their midst. He hoped that the time was not far distant when the Legislature would prevent the washing away into the sea of that which was absolutely necessary from a national point of view for the feeding of the people. If that material were placed on the Downs at the north of Brighton the crops would be ten times more abundant than at the present time, and the chances of destroying the sea-shore of Brighton as a bathing place altogether removed. In connection with the milk-supply this was most important. He looked upon it as a part of the duties of local authorities not only to provide for the grown-up, but to see that the younger children were provided with material which would help to sustain them in a healthy state of existence. Where a district did not provide a sufficient amount of milk for the people who inhabited it, and it had to be obtained at prices which were prohibitive to the poorer classes, there was something wrong. If the sewage was put on the Downs, as he had said, the milk-supply from this particular land could be ten or twenty times as much as it was at the present. The expenditure of capital upon sanitary works was never lost, and though it might not obtain an absolute reduction of the rates it reduced the death rate, and the utilization of sewage in the way he had stated would bring food down to a fair and average rate. He again thanked the Corporation of Brighton for inviting them to that beautiful town, and said that all would, when they returned, be able to say that the Congress at Brighton had been a great success.

The MAYOR OF BRIGHTON considered that Dr. Carpenter had sketched to the Inspectors much that was beyond what was necessary for their position: he had shadowed forth a list of first principles. Now they had nothing to do with first principles, they were engaged to carry out the work after the first principles had been sketched out; for it was not possible for men of ordinary calibre to grapple

with the great questions of sanitation. As to the disposal of sewage, they all knew that it should be returned to the land ; but when they were surrounded by the ratepayers they had to do the best thing for the smallest amount of money, and he considered that the Brighton Corporation had done the best under the circumstances. Addressing himself to the duties of the Inspectors, he said he thought discretion was very necessary, and that they should carry out their duties as nicely and kindly as possible. They must not only be discreet and civil, but it was necessary that a man should have a fairly good education before he took office. He thought an Inspector should have an elementary knowledge of diseases, and a knowledge of building construction was essential as well as a little knowledge of chemistry. He contended that it should be the occupier of every house who should be worried and terrified into keeping the drains in good order, and not the owner, and that liberty should be given to an owner, if he saw that an alteration could be done in a certain way, and that if it would be half the cost, to carry it out in that way. In conclusion, he proposed a vote of thanks to Dr. Carpenter for his address, and expressed the hope that the Chairman might long be spared to do his work as he had done hitherto.

Dr. A. NEWSHOLME seconded. He was glad to find that the examinations of the Sanitary Institute had been so highly spoken of, although he could not help thinking that the examinations should be supplemented by a little building construction. He also thought that the passing of the examination in hygiene at South Kensington was a very great thing.

Dr. CARPENTER acknowledged the compliment paid him. He knew that the fifty years of work in which he had been engaged could not continue much longer. Still, he was glad to do what he could in promulgating sanitary science.

"The Education, Examination of, and Legislation for, Sanitary Inspectors." By A. E. ADAMS, Sanitary Inspector, Wood Green.

ABSTRACT.

The author considered that it was largely through the Sanitary Institute that Sanitary Inspectors were better educated than they were twenty-five years ago.

He agreed with the Association of Public Sanitary Inspectors that Inspectors should have a knowledge of building construction, but considered that to qualify to pass the 1st Class, *advanced*, of the Science and Art Department, would occupy too much time, and was not necessary.

He considered the Sanitary Institute right in not having *Competitive* examinations ; and Sanitary Inspectors should feel