PUBLIC ABATTOIRS & THE UTILISATION OF CONDEMNED CARCASSES.

By LOUDON M. DOUGLAS.

ABSTRACT.

THE reader of the paper, which was illustrated by means of a large number of lantern slides, pointed out that the construction of public abattoirs in the United Kingdom was in a very backward state, and there were very few constructed on modern lines so far as plant is concerned. None had such appliances as those necessary for the utilisation of condemned carcasses, and we had to look to the Continent for places so equipped. Abattoirs were very desirable things, inasmuch as it was reasonable to suppose that animals would be much better treated before slaughter, and slaughtered with greater humanity. Public opinion insured this being done. There would also be the salutary influence of a trained inspector ever present; obviously, also, the avoidance of nuisance, which was incidental to the system of private slaughter-houses. Families could not live in a decent way if the slaughter-house formed part of the dwelling-house. Abattoirs are meant for the slaughter of animals in a humane and proper manner, and when properly constructed would lend themselves to the efficient inspection of our most important food supply. Not only was danger suspected from our meat supplies, but it had been proved long ago that many diseases were transmitted from diseased meat to the human subject, which under ordinary conditions were preventable. The methods in use in the United Kingdom for the slaughtering of animals were not up to date, inasmuch as masks and humane killers were not in general use. This seems to be a matter that requires remedying, for if the practice of slaughtering animals could be efficiently carried out in Continental countries, there is surely no reason why the same practice should not be carried out in the United Kingdom. The strongest argument for public abattoirs lies in the fact that efficient inspection is possible, and only then becomes possible. When animals are found to be diseased in private slaughter-houses there is a danger that the meat will be circulated and

cause much injury, whereas in the public abattoir it will be promptly condemned. Condemnation of diseased meat does not necessarily mean its total destruction, and it was strongly urged that modern scientific apparatus, which was easily obtainable, should be introduced into every abattoir with a view to utilising such condemned meat in a hygienic manner. The total cost of putting up such an apparatus would be a mere trifling one to the community, and would insure the very best use being made of condemned carcasses, and at the same time the residues would be treated so as to yield a profit. There was no profit to be made out of either burying or burning condemned carcasses, whereas a certain profit could be made by the use of modern scientific apparatus. The great value of this apparatus (the construction of which was illustrated in great detail) consists in its being able to work up the condemned carcasses in an innocuous way; the resulting products being dry meal and fat, which can be used for industrial purposes.

MR. JAMES KING (London) pointed out that it is a most difficult matter to get rid of the refuse of public abattoirs, especially when that refuse is collected at the rate of hundreds of tons in a year, and represents a direct loss. The same remark applied to diseased meat, and he therefore thought that the paper was a timely one, and would be welcomed by all who had anything to do with public abattoirs. There was, however, one remark of Mr. Douglas to which he was compelled to take exception, "The methods in use in the United Kingdom for the slaughtering of animals was not up to date, inasmuch as masks and humane killers were not in general use." His candid opinion was that the Continental workman was not as good a workman as the British butcher, and therefore had to resort to all sorts of patents and appliances to assist him. Shooting appliances were good enough in the case of docile animals, but he would like to ask what they would be like in the case of a Highland bull. They would be a complete failure, and he had had on several occasions to report unfavourably on them. In the hands of a competent man the pole-axe was the best instrument that could be devised. But it was an entirely different matter when the instrument was used by an untrained and unskilled man, and therefore he favoured a system of registration and licensing of competent killers by the authorities. Much the same thing applied in the case of slaughtering sheep. There was more cruelty in using the mallet than in sticking, and the question of time had also to be considered. A man had frequently to kill sheep at the rate of half-a-dozen in a couple of minutes, and there was really no time for methods which after all served no good purpose. He was of opinion that the solution of this problem was that only licensed and

850 *Public Abattoirs and Utilization of Condemned Carcasses.*

efficient men should be employed in slaughter-houses. In London they trained their men, and gave them every opportunity and encouragement to become efficient killers.

MR. J. L. LLOYD (Sheffield) stated that he could endorse much of what the last speaker had said in regard to the use of the pole-axe. He had once seen it very effectively used on the nape of the neck, the one man tickling the animal while the other dealt the blow, which was effective, while the action was quite unseen by the animal. Mr. Douglas had omitted to mention the probable cost of the apparatus necessary for destroying abattoir refuse. Gelatine was one of the by-products obtained by the German method of dealing with abattoir refuse, and if so, there ought to be a good market in this country for that article. Something ought to have been said as to the profit and loss side of the question.

PROFESSOR DEWAR (Edinburgh) supported Mr. King in his view that British methods of slaughtering were more humane, or at least not more cruel, than the usages of foreign countries. He doubted very much whether the method of sticking sheep were really more cruel than that of knocking down. If the instrument used were sharp, the whole operation was so quickly over that it was doubtful if there was any sensation of pain in the animal at all. He could only smile when he thought of some of the slaughtering devices that had been put on the market. With regard to the question of tuberculosis in cattle, he thought the conference might well emphasize the necessity of preventing the disease by putting a stop to breeding at farms where it was known to exist. Let them bring all possible pressure on the Government to show the necessity for arresting the development of the disease among the herds.

MR. JAMES MUNCE (Belfast) observed that in his capacity as an engineer he had inspected most of the abattoirs in the country, and he had to acknowledge that he had been disgusted with what he had seen in almost every instance; they were bad, and not to be compared to similar institutions on the Continent, especially those in Germany. The amount of cruelty that was perpetrated in British abattoirs was appalling. Abattoirs in the United Kingdom seemed to be wrongly planned; they were merely patches of buildings of the most haphazard description. There ought always to be a central slaughtering hall, and the animals should be brought in at one side where there was neither sight nor smell of blood; and everything should be done inside the abattoir under the supervision of some properly-appointed authority. At Barmen, in Germany, he had visited an abattoir which was quite hygienic, there being no disagreeable smell, everything was clean, there was plenty of air-space and none of the disgraceful overcrowding which characterised the home abattoirs. In English slaughter-houses he had seen cattle standing up to their fetlocks in blood, shivering as they watched other

animals being killed, and conscious that their own time was coming. Abattoirs were badly constructed, badly ventilated, and badly drained. There should be a surface drainage which would admit of proper cleansing.

The PRESIDENT (Professor J. McCall, Glasgow) thought that continental methods were much in advance of English methods. With the system adopted abroad, by the Bruneau method any bullock could be brought down by one or two, or at most by three blows, and personally he thought he could guarantee his own ability to do that. In this country he had seen as many as ten blows required to bring down a bullock, and they would agree that was not a pleasant or a desirable sight. He did not see that there was any difficulty in putting on the mask. The Bruneau method simplified killing, and he was much in favour of its adoption here.

MR. LOUDON M. DOUGLAS (Putney), in reply, expressed his acknowledgments at the remarks which had been made, and referred to the value of commodities produced from the refuse of abattoirs. In Hamburg they made a profit from the by-products, but apart from that he strongly recommended the adoption of up-to-date methods of treatment on the grounds of hygiene and sanitation. The cost of the apparatus would of course depend upon its size, but he believed that something like £800 would be required to work successfully a town as large as Sheffield. He explained that Mr. Munce had been associated with others on a commission to report on the different methods of slaughtering, and he would very strongly recommend any one interested in the matter to read their report, which was a valuable contribution to the literature of the subject. Personally he recommended the use of the Bruneau mask, and considered it was a great advance on the old method of knocking down. Like some of the speakers he, too, could tell of gruesome scenes in the slaughter-house, but he was not sure that they could be pictured with any advantage.

PROFESSOR J. M'CALL (Glasgow) intimated that he had a resolution to bring before the conference which he believed would be acceptable to them all. It had been framed in accordance with his own experience of city stabling, and in his opinion advocated a reform which was much desired. It was "That it be a recommendation from this Conference of Veterinary Inspectors to the Council of The Sanitary Institute that the time has now come when authority should be given by the Board of Agriculture to local authorities for the licensing of stables in large towns."

The recommendation was carried unanimously.