

CONGRESS AT NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

CONFERENCE VI.—SANITARY INSPECTORS.

Presidential Address, by WILLIAM HUDSPETH, Chief Sanitary Inspector, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

(ABSTRACT).

AS a Novocastrian of over fifty years standing, I am justly proud of our City. Here you will find Science doing its deadliest and its finest work, for not only has it forged in our munition centres the weapons of destruction, but it has in our Colleges and Medical training centres produced the things that enhance the glory of life.

Here you will find some real centres of interest and beauty, our ancient Castle with its memories of olden days, our Cathedral, the shrine of ages, our Dene, a centre of refreshing beauty. I know, on the other hand, there are the slums, which I am glad to say are gradually disappearing, and will disappear more quickly with the onward march of our City. As Citizens, we are proud that this, the thirtieth Congress of the Institute, and the first after the cessation of hostilities, should be held within our walls. When the War burst upon us in 1914, it revolutionised the whole of the City's outlook, produced new economic problems and social difficulties; but, with a spirit characteristic of Tyneside, they were met and overcome.

On the other hand, our population was soon vastly increased. It is computed that approximately 40,000 workers flocked into our City from all parts of the country. During the whole time of the War, many of our day schools and public buildings were occupied by the military. At times, we had as many as 60,000 soldiers in or near the City. This great influx threw upon our shoulders an increased responsibility, but in spite of the many dangers such a position engendered, disease and sickness were kept down to the normal; surely a testimony to the devoted work of the City's Health Department! For instance, in one year alone (1917), billet inspections entailed 2,776 visits, and, in the same year, 4,465 inspections of factories and workshops were made, and this with a reduced and comparatively new, but certainly a loyal, Staff.

In previous wars, the dark spectre of disease threw its shadow across all military plans, as for instance in the Crimean War, but in the present case, owing to the sound scientific basis upon which our profession now rests, not

only was the spectre dispelled, but our troops were enabled to live in a degree of health and purity hitherto unknown, the percentage of deaths due to disease being not only relatively, but absolutely, the lowest known to History. If Hannibal, or Alexander, or Napoleon could have campaigned under such conditions, how different would have been the history of militarism.

As to the future, the least that can be said is that it is full of wondrous possibilities. There is the question of housing (a question which is being fully dealt with in other Sections of the Congress), but it is one in which the voice of the Sanitary Inspector must be clearly heard, for only thus can the future health of the Nation be determined. There is also the question of the Ministry of Health, a reform long overdue. As a nation, we have hitherto been more anxious about preserving our breeds of horses than preserving a clean, virile humanity. The War has taught us in a painful manner the intense value of human life, and thus, through a Ministry of Health, we can as a nation eradicate many evils that mar and stunt the growth of the English race. There is one question which arises here, viz., our position as Sanitary Inspectors. Are we to receive a fuller measure of Government recognition, with a right of direct access to Government authority, and a definite voice in all things affecting our profession, or are we to become a mere subsidiary adjunct to the medical profession? To an extent, the right of determining this is in our own power. The Institute must raise its standard of training correspondingly with the progress of Science. It must see to it that the remuneration is such as will attract the best type of men into our ranks.

It would also be to the advantage of the profession if a College or University Course were possible for those intending ultimately to hold the higher positions in our ranks, for in every walk of life education is the key that unlocks the gate of the golden future.

The Pollution of Rivers.

By Prof. A. MEEK, M.Sc., F.Z.S.

(PRÉCIS.)

THE case is that although our rivers and fresh waters are notably productive in valuable food fishes, especially migratory salmonidae (Mr. Hutton states that the annual yield of salmon in the waters of the United Kingdom is 6,000 tons) they are becoming much less productive owing to the increase of sewage and other pollutions poured into them. Many have already ceased to be salmon rivers, and others are rapidly approaching that condition. There is a gradually growing opinion therefore that an attempt