

A Public Health Congress was held at Dublin recently under the auspices of the Department of Local Government and Public Health. The Public Health branch of this department is now responsible for yearly increasing expenditure for preventive measures such as water supplies, sewerage, maternity and child welfare schemes, schools' medical service, the provision of School Meals for necessitous children, the supervision of food supplies, housing and the treatment of infectious diseases.

The grants from State funds in aid of the maternity and child welfare schemes, school medical services and the provision of school meals total more than £33,000 yearly, while those for housing and for the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis exceed £242,000 and £1,000 respectively. The expenditure from local rates in respect of the services enumerated is beginning to impose a severe strain on the ratepayers and is competing rapidly with the high expenditure on the upkeep of roads.

Early Records.

Early records show that plagues and pestilences were of frequent occurrence and that mortality was exceedingly high. Each outbreak had to run its course unchecked. Legislation of very recent date provides for the inspection of meat and milk supplies and the enforcement of cleanliness. It is interesting therefore to recall early local attempts towards public health.

In the seventeenth century there was a body called the Master and Company of Butchers at Kinsale whose regulations provided that if any of the Company or any foreigner should expose for sale any "blown" meat the Master should seize it and distribute it to the poor and have the offender punished. There also it was ordained in 1722 that "no butcher who sells or keeps meat in the market do smoke or handle anything that is dirty during the selling of such meat under a penalty for every offence."

The Bellman of Kinsale.

So early as the year 1492 a Sanitary Act was passed relating to two rivers at Dublin called the Poddle, which were filled and topped "as well by the inhabitants of houses . . . as dung of beasts to the great hurt and damage of the diocese and college." In 1667 a bellman was appointed at Kinsale and in addition to his duties of walking the streets nightly and announcing the state of the wind and weather and the hour he was obliged to keep the channels free from filth and dirt. At Bandon—that town where "Turk, Jew or Atheist might enter, but Papist never"—and where it was said "that even the pigs were Protestants" there was an ordinance for the suppressing of "hogs, swyne, and pigs openlye to passe and goe in the streets." There the offending animals became the property of the Corporation and were to be disposed of if the Provost should think meet.

Assizes of Bread and Ale

In addition to the supervision of meat supplies there were also the Assizes of Bread and Ale, and of Weights and Measures. In 1703 the Corporation of Kinsale made an order that as some of the inhabitants were brewing with gutter-water which "might cause infection or bring a filthy report on the place" the persons so offending were to be fined. Eleven years later it was decreed that "no person brew with gutter-water except it be during the four months of Winter when the water runs clear."

Health of Prisoners.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century the first of a series of public health Acts was passed. One of the earliest at that time was "to preserve the health of prisoners in gaol." Other Acts provided for:—Sewers in Dublin, a cistern with ball and stop cock for every house in Dublin, water for the more effectually preserving the health of His Majesty's subjects, the erection of an Apothecary's Hall, and for sums to be presented by Grand Juries for removing nuisances.

Boards of Health Established.

An Act was passed in 1819 authorising the Lord Lieutenant to establish Boards of Health in cases of "expected" contagious disease. The application should in the first instance come from representatives appointed at a public meeting. In the following year the vestries of every city or town containing more than one thousand inhabitants were empowered to appoint at least two unpaid officers of health for each year. The Tralee vestry un-animously agreed that there was no necessity for such appointments and that no sum should be levied for public health purposes.

It may be worth mentioning that there was in Dublin 100 years ago a General Board of Health. The amount of money available for the services of the financial year ended 5th January, 1829, was £297 7s. 1d. and this sum included an unexpended balance of £6 18s. 9d. brought forward from the previous year. The Secretary to the Board was paid for 366 days at ten shillings per day, late Irish currency, and £4 3s. 6d. for travelling to Athy to ascertain the state of an outbreak of fever there.

An Opportune Time.

In 1875-8 comprehensive Acts were passed relating to Public Health and these Acts are the basis of practically the entire expenditure at the present time. The time is opportune for asking: (1) Are the public conveyances, the licensed hackney, the bus, and every compartment of a train used for smoking, spitting, and the carrying of persons suffering from infectious diseases? (2) Is meat exposed for sale in open windows and subject to the germ-laden dust wafted up by passing cars? (3) Are the buildings in which Executive Sanitary Officers have their offices and in which local dances are held amongst the most insanitary within the jurisdiction of the local authority of particular areas?

The Seminary, Killarney, beat the Tralee C.B.S. boys in the first round of the Dunloe Cup Competition at Tralee on Saturday last on the score of 5 goals 5 points to 1 goal 2 points. The match was a fairly good one and Killarney de-