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LECTURE.

"The Promotion of Health and Happiness by Local Authorities," by Dr. Fenton, D.P.H.

There was a very large attendance at the lecture given recently by Dr. Fenton, D.P.H., Medical Officer of Health for the Royal Borough of Kensington, at 194, Queen's Gate. Sir Alfred Rice-Oxley, C.B.E., M.D., took the chair and, in introducing Dr. Fenton, said that he did not know anyone more able, either as regards a knowledge of facts or a power of lucid expression, to give an address on the subject. As evidence of this statement, Sir Alfred drew attention to the following points:—Since Dr. Fenton became Medical Officer of Health, nine Infant Welfare Centres, twelve Day Nurseries, a Children's Hospital and other institutions were all working under his Child Welfare schemes. Health lectures were given and special treatment for arthritis and acute rheumatism, etc. Ante-natal work, slum clearances, registration of insanitary houses let in lodgings, collection of facts on overcrowding and indecent occupations, in these and in many such works Dr. Fenton had concerned himself either as originator or as one of the principal organisers. North Kensington had become a different place to what it was, and Dr. Fenton had played no small part in educating Parliament and County Councils in the promotion of Health work; he had lectured in America and had studied health conditions in central European countries.

In commencing his lecture Dr. Fenton paid a tribute to what he owed to the encouragement that had been given to him by Sir Alfred, who had been three times Mayor of the Royal Borough and had taken an exceedingly active part in encouraging all reforms in connection with public health. Dr. Fenton gave us an interesting glance back into the conditions of Kensington in the time of the Great Plague. There was no drainage scheme at that time, the streets were cobbled and open channels ran through them, collecting rain and impurities. House refuse was thrown into the street, and this was regarded as a useful practice, as it became trodden in and was considered to improve the surface. Like the rest of London most houses were bathless, in fact the condition of public health was no one's concern; people did just what they liked in regard to nuisances. Until Chadwick took up the matter, little thought was given to conditions affecting health. England was nevertheless the first country to point the way to a proper Public Health Service.

People are in the habit of contending that there is nothing now to compare with the good old days, but we have only to look at a few statistics to find that these "good old days" were not after all nearly so good as some would have us believe. Fifty-seven years ago an average life span would be forty-one years for men and forty-four for women; now the average is fifty-seven for men and

sixty-one for women. Thus far have we prolonged life, in spite of the strain and rush of our time; many would have given up their fortunes to have what we also possess, to such an extent and that is good health, for, after all, self-preservation is always the thought foremost in men's minds.

In 1900, the infantile death-rate was 161 children per 1,000, nearly two in every ten, and that does not indicate how many were crippled and handicapped through ill-health. The infantile death-rate to-day is 60 per 1,000. On one occasion, in speaking at the Caxton Hall, John Burns said that he would never be content until the infantile death-rate had been reduced to 70 per 1,000. Recently Dr. Fenton had had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Burns and pointed out to the latter that he had reduced the infant death-rate in Kensington to under 70, but Mr. Burns replied that, in view of the work being done, he hoped that he would live to see the death-rate reduced to 50 per 1,000 and below it. With regard to the Maternal death-rate, things were not so pleasing, because that had not declined to the same extent. Although legislation had been introduced in 1902 to protect the mother, there were no ante-natal clinics established until 1922. Now 76 per cent. were attending these clinics and, in a period of five years, there had been only 47 deaths. In that period roughly an average of 50 per cent. had attended the ante-natal clinics and 46 of those deaths had occurred in cases of women who had not done so. The remaining one was a case of a Jewess who, at her first visit, was shown to have albumen in her urine; she was pressed to continue to attend the clinic but did not do so.

Drainage is now so perfect that the number of deaths, arising through faulty sanitation, has been greatly reduced, and much more consideration is given to the health of individuals. It is to be noted that the poor are far more readily affected by an infectious disease than the rich, but typhoid presents the one exception to this. The reason for this is that the poor cannot afford to leave this healthy City of London. The rich get away to the country and more especially to France, to places where less attention is given to the water supply; they drink polluted water and so fall ill. A very large number of cases of typhoid fever arise in this way. Dr. Fenton then referred to the tuberculosis which had formerly been commonly spoken of as "The White Man's Scourge." It had proved a very heavy tax on the National Health Insurance Scheme of Mr. Lloyd George but, owing to the efforts taken to combat tuberculosis, the position now is that such diseases as cancer and heart disease far outstrip tuberculosis in virulence. Dr. Fenton believed that many in the room would live to see tuberculosis as uncommon as typhoid now is. In order to achieve this we have to concentrate on the relations as well as on the patient and, in every way, work against the spread of infection and for the maintenance of individual

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