

Dr. E.P. Manby's report to the Local Government Board upon the sanitary circumstances and administration of the Urban District of Ince-in-Makerfield.

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REPORTS

TO THE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD

ON

PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICAL SUBJECTS.

(NEW SERIES No. 65.)

Dr. E. P. Manby's Report to the Local Govern-
ment Board upon the Sanitary Circum-
stances and Administration of the Urban
District of Ince-in-Makerfield.



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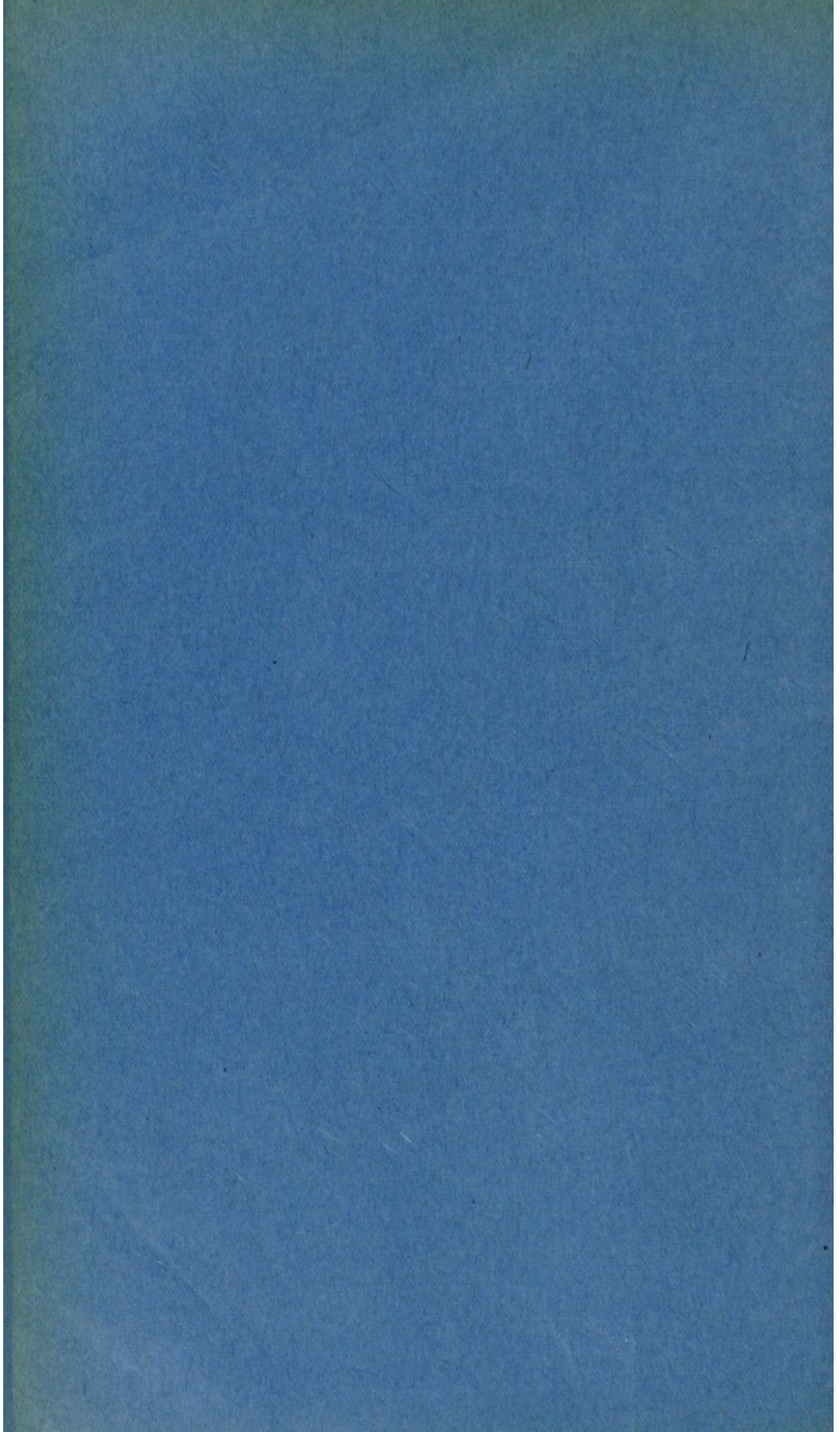
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Dr. E. P. Manby's Report to the Local Government Board upon the Sanitary Circumstances and Administration of the Urban District of Ince-in-Makerfield.

THEODORE THOMSON,
Assistant Medical Officer,
2nd April, 1912.

The Board received an application from the Urban District Council of Ince-in-Makerfield, on April 22nd, 1911, for sanction to an increase in the salary of the council's inspector of nuisances from £130 to £150 per annum, and on May 19th they were asked to sanction the appointment permanently.

Correspondence ensued, and it became clear that, although the population of Ince was more than 22,000, the inspector of nuisances received no assistance in the execution of his duties beyond that afforded by one of the council's workmen in regard to the disinfection of premises.

In October, 1910, the Board had addressed a communication to the urban district council in reference to the unduly high rate of mortality amongst infants which had prevailed in Ince for many years. Furthermore, the district had been the subject of unfavourable reports by Dr. Franklin Parsons in 1879 and 1886, and there was reason to believe that the amount of improvement in a sanitary sense which had taken place since those reports were made was not large.

Accordingly it was thought well that the district should be re-inspected by one of the Board's medical inspectors. This duty was allotted to me, and I visited Ince on October 31st, 1911, and on subsequent dates.

The urban district of Ince-in-Makerfield has an area of 2,320 acres. Its population at the census of 1911 was 22,038. The population in 1901 was 21,262, and in 1891 19,255. The local estimate of the number of houses within the district is 4,555, but in the recently issued preliminary report of the 1911 census the number of "families or separate occupiers" is given as 4,365.

The rateable value of the district is £96,612; the assessable value is £73,110; the total indebtedness is £64,401; and the debt under the Public Health Acts is £11,372. A penny rate produces £305. The total rates for 1911 were 5s. 6d. in £1, with an additional charge of 1s. in £1 as a water rent.

Ince-in-Makerfield stands upon the coal measures, and the male population is employed almost entirely in coal mining and iron working. The district is very liable to subsidence of the ground in consequence of the mining operations, and, accordingly,

structural defects in houses and many accumulations of water upon unoccupied land are met with. It was thought that the limit of subsidence had been reached about the time that Dr. Parsons made his reports, but since then old workings have been re-opened and subsidences continue.

Broadly speaking, the reports of Dr. Parsons made in 1879 and 1886 present a picture of the district to-day, though a good deal has indeed been done in the way of sewerage, paving of streets, reducing the size of privy middens, and in improving the system of scavenging since 1879. But many streets remain unpaved, and the town must be classed still as a privy-midden one. In regard to street paving, it is but fair to state that the council have scheduled recently some 50 streets under the Private Streets Works Act, 1892.

A small ill-designed hospital for infectious diseases was erected between the dates of Dr. Parsons' first and second report.

The remarks made by Dr. Parsons upon the probable causes of the high rate of infantile mortality in Ince remain as true to-day as they were in 1879:—

- (1) Local insanitary conditions.
- (2) Social and domestic conditions and habits unfavourable to health.

The medical officer of health has not failed to refer to these causes of high infantile mortality in many annual and special reports which he has made to the council since his appointment.

The infantile mortality rate was 181 per 1,000 births when Dr. Parsons reported in 1879, and the average for the ten years 1899-1908 was 199. In 1909 the rate was 212, but in 1910 it fell to 165, probably in consequence of the summer being a cold and wet one. In 1911 the infantile mortality rate was 184. The council have adopted the Notification of Births Act recently, and a female health visitor has been appointed who will act under the direction of the medical officer of health.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES.

The water supply of Ince is derived partly from wells in the new red sandstone at Golborne, five miles south of Ince, and partly from the Rivington Waterworks of the Corporation of Liverpool. The water is of good quality and the service is a constant one.

About 40 houses at Little Westwood are supplied from a well there.

Dwellings in Ince are mostly two-storey brick buildings; many of them are very old. It is thought that there are about 400 back-to-back houses. A number of other houses are without through ventilation upon one or other floor. Many houses are dirty and are in need of thorough stripping and cleansing.

Eaves troughs of wood exist very generally.

Especially dilapidated or dirty houses were met with in Albert Street, Edward Street, Johnson's Yard, Bridgwater Street, Peter Street, Bellgreen Lane, Tolketh Street, Water Street, Fox Street, Cann Row, and Margaret Street.

The council have appointed the inspector of nuisances to be inspector under the Housing and Town Planning Act, 1909, and the work of inspection under Section 17 of this Act has commenced.

Backyards are unpaved as a rule, and they allow water to accumulate in pools, and the surface is often contaminated with faecal matter and with refuse of one or other sort.

No fewer than 199 common yards are stated to exist in Ince, and not infrequently the space at the back of a row of cottages is entirely open, so that carts can be driven along between the dwellings and the out-buildings. Some of these spaces are being dealt with under the Private Streets Works Act, 1892.

The existence of so many unpaved common yards is one of the most displeasing features of Ince, and but little improvement in this respect appears to have been made since Dr. Parsons reported in 1879.

In a few instances I saw that part of a common yard had been paved by the owner of certain houses while the owner of adjoining houses had left the space adjacent to them unpaved. The contrast between the cleanly appearance of the paved part and the untidy appearance of the rest of the yard was most striking. And generally throughout the district the contrast between paved and unpaved yard is obvious.

The medical officer of health and the inspector of nuisances have refrained from dealing with common yards when inspecting the houses abutting upon them because they had been advised that such yards whether belonging to defective houses or not did not come within the definition of "dwelling house" as given in the Housing Acts, 1890 and 1909. It would seem that even if the common yard cannot be said to "belong to" the houses it can be said to be "usually enjoyed therewith," and that if all the abutting houses are defective the whole yard could be dealt with. If, however, there is real difficulty in this connexion under the Housing Acts there should be none in getting the matter dealt with under Section 91 of the Public Health Act, 1875. Indeed, in 1886, Dr. Parsons, after consultation with the Board, advised the Ince authorities that if nuisance could be prevented from recurring only by a yard being paved they might require this to be done under this section.

Excrement and refuse disposal is chiefly by privy-middens, of which there are 2,680 in Ince. There are some 570 water closets in the district, and no fewer than 140 of these were installed in 1910. There are 1,297 houses without separate closet accommodation. The middens are roofed, as a rule, and many of them have been reduced in size since Dr. Parsons' visits, but until the last two or three years all new houses have been built possessing privy middens. In many of the newer houses the privy is much nearer the dwelling than is usual in the old houses, and the midden is often more difficult to cleanse as the door is higher up and smaller. Dr. Parsons recommended that privy middens, if erected at all, should be so arranged that they could be emptied from the exterior. But, as a fact, there is hardly a midden in Ince which does not require the scavenger to get inside it to shovel out the filth.

This filth is often deposited upon the adjoining ground, which is mostly unpaved, before it can be carted away. I met with instances of foul liquid from such heaps of filth flowing slowly over the yard surface to a drain in the roadway; and generally it was obvious that where a privy had recently been emptied fouling of the adjacent ground had occurred.

Many of the occupiers of dwellings in Ince complained to me of the nuisance they experienced from the proximity of privy middens, and particularly of the nuisance arising during the emptying of the middens. I received also many complaints of the nuisance arising from the presence of flies in the middens and in the houses during the warm weather.

Removal of excremental and other refuse is effected by the night-soil department of the Ince council's staff. The filth is deposited upon a number of "tips" throughout the district. Each tip is approved by the medical officer of health before its use is sanctioned.

I visited several tips and I found no nuisance to exist at the moment, but it would be well that more concentration of tipping, with prompt covering of the tip-end with earth, should replace the present system of tipping more or less all over the tipping ground.

Sewerage and sewage disposal.—The district is sewered throughout. The sewers are of glazed stoneware pipe, except for a length of brick sewer two feet in diameter, and for the terminal sewer at the Westwood Sewage Works, which is of iron. The sewers are ventilated by some 50 or 60 shafts, and to a small extent by manholes at the road level. Flushing is done weekly in the Platt Bridge area where the fall is small, and monthly elsewhere.

The surveyor states that the condition of the sewers is fairly satisfactory, and that except in the Platt Bridge and Cann Row areas, they are capable of taking the additional amount of sewage which would result from a general conversion of privies to water closets in Ince.

All the sewage from the Platt Bridge area, in the south of the district, discharges into the sewers of the Hindley Urban District Council, except that from a few houses (11), which passes to a small tank and thence is pumped on to some land owned by the Ince council. A portion of the sewers in the northern part of Ince empties into the sewerage system of the Corporation of Wigan.

The bulk of the sewage of Ince passes to the council's works at Westwood. The methods of treatment here comprise settling tanks and filter beds over which the sewage is distributed by means of sprinklers. Formerly the effluent ran on to land, but owing to subsidence of the ground this is now impossible. In fact, the sewage tanks are almost surrounded by some 70 acres of water which has gradually accumulated. At the time of my visit a stiff breeze was blowing, and it seemed not unlikely that a portion of the lowest filter beds might be washed away. At this time the outlets from the filter beds were some 1 foot 6 inches below the level of the surrounding water.

The tanks themselves have settled considerably, and the terminal sewer which is stated to have been below the ground level ten years ago is now supported on brick piers 14 feet high. The council are proposing to establish a pumping plant to get rid of the water which threatens to submerge their sewage works. As subsidence is likely to continue, it would be well to establish new works outside the area of subsidence. This may mean going a distance of some miles, but the council will need to face the question seriously ere long.

There is but one *Common Lodging House* in Ince, and it appears to be kept in fair order.

Three *Bakehouses* were visited and were found to have dirty floors. There is no underground bakehouse in Ince.

I inspected a number of *Dairies and Cowsheds* and I found them mostly to be deficient in lighting. The local regulations require that each cow be allowed 800 cubic feet of air space, but this amount does not appear to be obtained as a rule.

There is one *Marine Store Dealer* in Ince who is in a somewhat extensive way of business. Her premises leave much to be desired from a sanitary point of view. The Board have recently expressed their willingness to sanction the scheduling of rag-dealing as an "offensive trade" in the district of Ince.

There is no *Slaughter-house* in Ince.

The Hospital for Infectious Diseases was erected in 1882, and it is capable of accommodating some 14 patients. It is a brick structure, but it is ill-designed in that the two main wards are side by side, and so cross ventilation is impossible. Further, a small ward opens directly into the kitchen.

A modern building contains a Goddard, Massey, and Warner's steam disinfecting apparatus of a size 4 feet by 3 feet by 5 feet. There is a small laundry and a mortuary at the hospital.

A corrugated iron building of modern type stands near the brick hospital and contains two wards, each for four beds apparently. This hospital is intended for the reception of cases of smallpox until such time as the Joint Committee, of which Ince is a constituent, have provided a smallpox hospital upon their site at Orrell.

The site of the Ince hospitals is surrounded by a wooden fencing some five feet in height.

ADMINISTRATION.

The council have adopted Parts II. and III. of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1890, the Private Streets Works Act, 1892, and the Notification of Births Act, 1907, and have put in force with the Board's consent Parts II. to V. of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1907.

The administration of the Midwives Act, and of the Sale of Food and Drugs Acts in Ince is in the hands of the Lancashire County Council.

The Ince council received the Board's approval in 1909 to the following byelaws:—

- New streets and buildings.
- Cleansing of footways.
- Nuisances.
- Common lodging houses.
- Houses let in lodgings.
- Offensive trades.
- Slaughter-houses.

Regulations under Article 13 of the Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshops Order, 1885, were made in 1894.

The Medical Officer of Health is Dr. J. H. Fletcher, who receives a salary of £100 per annum, half of which is repaid from county funds. Dr. Fletcher receives in addition £25 per annum as superintendent of the hospital for infectious diseases.

He is also school medical officer for Ince.

Dr. Fletcher has held office as medical officer of health since 1902, and is an efficient officer.

He has advised the council unceasingly to abolish privy-middens throughout their district.

The Inspector of Nuisances is Mr. T. H. Hindley, who was appointed in 1909. Mr. Hindley is also inspector of canal boats. He receives a salary of £150 per annum in respect of which the council have applied for sanction to repayment of a moiety from county funds. Mr. Hindley holds certificates for sanitation from the Royal Sanitary Institute, and for meat inspection from the University of Liverpool. He is a capable officer, but he is altogether overburdened by the work of his office. Mr. Hindley receives no assistance except in regard to the fumigation of dwellings. Hence it is not possible for him to devote adequate time to the systematic inspection of dwellings, and to the searching out of minor sanitary defects, and for dirty houses, and the like. The clerical work necessary in his office takes up no inconsiderable part of Mr. Hindley's time.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

The most urgent sanitary need in Ince is the conversion of privy-middens to water-closets. At the time of my visit it appeared that the council were not prepared to embark upon a general scheme of conversion. The chairman and vice-chairman told me that the council proposed to deal each year with such privies as were definite nuisances, and they pointed with pride to the fact that in 1910 the conversion of 140 privies was so secured. I replied that at this rate it would be many years before the town ceased to be a privy-midden one, and I urged that a loan should be applied for, and that conversions should be undertaken systematically under section 39 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1907. The scavenging of Ince and the wages of the staff employed in the work cost no less than £1,649 per annum. Twelve labourers (including the foreman), six carters and six horses are employed by the council, and, in addition, a carter and a horse are contracted for at Platt-Bridge.

The foreman of the night-soil department receives 35s. per week, and his duties consist in supervising and arranging the work of the scavengers, and in inspecting privy-middens to see if they require emptying. If so, the work is done forthwith. Hence, it follows that much re-traversing of ground occurs. I saw many instances in the course of my inspection where one or two middens in a row had been scavenged recently, but others, not being full, had been left. In a few days these would be full, and a further visit of the scavenger to the row would be necessary.

The defence put forward for this arrangement is that complaints of overflowing middens have been abolished thereby. This result, however, could be attained by a proper method of systematic scavenging, and does not, in fact, seem to be secured by the Ince method, inasmuch as I received not a few complaints as to the length of time middens were left unscavenged, and I saw several which were over-full.

I have no hesitation in saying that the services of one inspector of nuisances are not sufficient for a place the size of Ince, and the medical officer of health expressed a similar view in the first annual report he submitted. The council should appoint a second fully trained and certificated inspector of nuisances, and he, or the present inspector, should be made responsible for the efficient working of the night-soil department.

The present foreman of this department confines his attention to the filth receptacles, and he does not appear always to report structural defects in these forthwith. A trained inspector besides noting the condition of the middens would pay attention to the condition of the dwelling-houses. Hence the remedying of minor sanitary defects would be secured in their early stages, and this would be an advantage not only to the tenants but also to the owners, upon the principle of a "stitch in time."

RECOMMENDATIONS.

(1.) The Urban District Council of Ince should embark upon a systematic and progressive scheme of privy conversion for their district without delay. For this purpose a loan should be obtained, and the conversion of privies to water-closets should be carried out under section 39 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1907.

The paving of yards—and especially of common yards—should be secured at the same time.

(2.) In connexion with the scheme of privy conversion, the council should have careful examination made of the sewers in their district with a view to relaying such as are defective by reason of insufficient fall, or otherwise.

The council should consider seriously the question of establishing sewage works at some place which is not liable to subsidence.

(3.) The council should re-organise the arrangements for public scavenging in Ince, so that ash-tubs, middens, and privies so long as they exist, are emptied more frequently and with less re-traversing of ground than obtains at present.

The district should be divided into a number of sub-districts for purposes of scavenging.

(4.) A second inspector of nuisances should be appointed who should devote his whole time to his duties. He should be fully trained and certificated, and he, or the present inspector, should be made responsible for the proper carrying out of public scavenging in Ince.

(5.) The council should press forward the systematic inspection of dwellings upon which they have embarked under the Housing, Town Planning Act, &c., 1909.

In addition to remedying structural defects, property owners should be required to "strip and cleanse" without delay the many dirty houses now existing in Ince, and in future more attention should be given by the inspectors of nuisances to the question of dirty houses.

(6.) The council should provide, within a reasonable time, a modern hospital for infectious diseases, in place of the ill-designed hospital now existing.

In concluding this report I beg to tender to the members and officers of the urban district council my best thanks for assistance and information most willingly afforded to me throughout my inspection.

E. P. MANBY.

