

SHANGHAI'S MILK SUPPLY

Jan. 31.

It is to be hoped that all rate-payers will study the report of the Pure Milk Commission, issued as a supplement to the Municipal Gazette last Tuesday. It is interesting, it concerns us all and it proposes certain definite measures the bearing of which everybody should understand. The object which the Commission kept continually in view was to combine purity of the milk supply, sufficiency and price. For example, it would have been absurd to recommend such requirements in a dairy as the Chinese cow-keeper could only fulfil at a cost that would raise the price of his milk beyond customers' ability to pay. Accordingly two grades of licence have been suggested, A and B. With the conditions contained in A, there are already dairies which comply or very nearly so: with those of B no unnecessary difficulty or expense should be involved in compliance. The Commission did not attempt to force all dairies up to the standard of the best foreign dairies; the vast majority of consumers could not pay the price entailed. The wisdom of the case was to endeavour to secure milk of reasonably good quality fit at least when boiled for human consumption. This Grade B appears to do. It is interesting to note that the Commission heard the legal representative of a certain dairy, who "urged that when a sample of milk is taken for analysis, half the same should be returned to the dairy owner for the purpose, if desired, of an independent analysis." It is hardly surprising to read that "the Commission see great danger in this of the dairy owner substituting another sample." The same witness also urged that public notification in the Gazette, of adulterated milk having been found in any dairy, before conviction in the Mixed Court, did much more damage to the dairyman than even the conviction. The public reply to this will be immediately, "Then let us have more and wider publicity."

The Commission did not reach its conclusions without personally inspecting a number of dairies of which the following is certainly no exaggerated description:

The Commission was very adversely impressed by the insanitary conditions existing in many of the dairies inspected: conditions which in many cases might very easily be remedied without undue hardship to the dairy keeper. In many cases the cow-stables were ill-lit, badly ventilated, lacking in drainage and over-crowded. Milk handling rooms were inadequate, and milking utensils and bottles of patterns very difficult to thoroughly cleanse. Instances were observed where the boiler from which hot water should have been obtained for washing bottles, etc., had evidently not been in use for a considerable time. Open latrines and uncovered kongs were found in close proximity to cow stables and milk rooms. Generally there was evidence that, either the inspection had been very inadequately carried out, or that the Health Office Inspectors were lacking in power to enforce the licence conditions.

The conclusion is the need for stringent enforcement of all regulations and conditions, with the useful recommendation

that the licence be attached to the premises as well as to the owner and that on a flagrant breach of licence conditions after due warning, the Council should withdraw or suspend the licence.

This would stop the common practice of a delinquent carrying on by a proxy.

But when all other conditions are fulfilled, there is still at times a shortage in the requisite quantity of milk, which undoubtedly is made up by milk from unlicensed dairies outside the Settlement. The enormous difficulty of checking this influx is obvious and the Commission therefore lays stress on the fullest control being given to those who have to see that the new licence conditions are observed. But attacking the problem from the other end, the Commission finds that the dearness and occasional shortage of milk are due to the frequency of disease amongst cattle, and this leads up to its most important recommendation of all, namely the appointment of a Municipal Veterinary Surgeon. Here is its reasoning in a nutshell:

1. The question of the plentiful supply of pure milk at a reasonable cost is dependent upon the prevention and the spread of cattle diseases.

2. Health Inspectors are not qualified to diagnose diseases of cattle. Hence they cannot effectively prevent the spread of diseases.

3. Certification every three months by approved local practising Veterinary Surgeons would not prove sufficient to check the spread of tuberculosis, rinderpest or other infectious diseases.

4. Other matters which only an absolutely independent and fully qualified Veterinary Surgeon can control, and which are of the highest importance are:—(a) The disposal of carcasses of animals dead from disease and (b) The movement of animals suffering from diseases over Municipal roads.

Space does not permit of going at length into all the reasons why the Commission presses for a new official and cannot accept the three monthly certification urged by the Commissioner of Public Health and mentioned in clause No. 3 above. They are given fully in the report and, although the appointment of a municipal "vet," will cost money and undoubtedly occasion the greatest controversy when the report is considered by the Council, we believe that the Commission will be held at least to have made out a strong case.

No summary can do justice to all the points in the report and it is certainly to be hoped that ratepayers will take the trouble to study for themselves a document which assuredly endeavours to make a real contribution to public health. But one more quotation may be underlined:—

In conclusion, the Commission would like to impress upon the public that, while the Health Department may do everything possible to protect their interests, it must be for the public to exercise their own personal supervision. If consumers would remove their custom from dairies convicted of serious breaches of licence conditions, and go to the trouble of visiting their dairies, they would be helping towards a Pure Milk Supply to a greater extent than can be accomplished by any Regulations which the Council may see fit to impose.

Just as people cannot be made virtuous by act of parliament, no municipal regulations can ensure hygiene in households whose mistress never enters her own kitchen.