The Annual Report

Mr. D. Roberts (chairman of the Executive Council) read the annual report, which was as follows: "In presenting the tenth annual report of the Association, the Executive Council report that owing to the abnormal conditions prevailing, no attempt has been made to estimate the progress which has been achieved in a state of suspension. Their Report, however, is submitted for information. The quarterly public meeting, which it had been fully hoped to hold at Burgess Hill in July, had at the last moment to be deferred owing to the pressure of work falling on Mr. Bury, who had kindly consented to preside over the chairman's absence, caused by his only assistant joining the Chelsea and a number of official being killed in the town. Realising the difficulty of fixing the quarterly meetings under the existing circumstances, the Executive decided that it was advisable to suspend these meetings, and therefore requested the Secretary to send a circular letter to the members explaining the circumstances and appealing for their continued support and interest. Two new members were supplied, namely, Councillor H. Wyborn, Lewes, and Mr. F. Greensnow, sanitary inspector for the Battle Rural District Council. The only other contributed, during the year, and read at the annual meeting of the Association, was by Mr. J. Steinhauer, medical officer of health for Lewes, entitled "Some Notes on Public Health Work in a Military Camp." The Secretary reports that during the abnormal conditions which have prevailed during the year, he has not found it possible to issue more than six or seven of the Journal (Nos. 17). He, however, thanks those members who were kindly contributed articles and hopes that he may issue Journal No. 18, in which articles will appear. While recognising the many claims and applications of members for subscriptions, he paid for as far as possible, and that the members will receive their financial support in the Association. Your Committee hold three meetings at which only a small attendance of eight members. The Executive reports that in consequence of the many applications for assistance, Mr. C. T. Gardner and Mr. G. W. Wharr have respectively been invited to attend the meetings during last year. In proposing the adoption of the report, Mr. Bury referred to the members, public officials and the public at large, who had so generously contributed articles and reports during the year. He felt bound to say that he was XR favourably for their work, and overcome the difficulties with which they were often faced. He read the report and moved that it be accepted as follows:

Mr. Hugh Street, Lewes, Mayor, R.A.M.C.
Mr. C. J. Perks, Captain, R.A.M.C.
Mr. W. W. West, Colonel, Major R.A.M.C.
Mr. W. H. Newcomen, Captain, R.A.M.C.
Mr. W. A. Dow, Lieutenant, Major R.A.M.C.
Mr. F. C. Greenfield, Brighton, Sergeant, R.A.M.C.
Mr. W. H. Newcomen, Brighton, Sergeant, Army Services Corps.
Mr. W. W. West, Colonel, Major R.A.M.C.
Mr. W. C. Greenfield, Brighton, Sergeant, R.A.M.C.
Mr. W. W. West, Colonel, Major R.A.M.C.
Mr. W. W. West, Colonel, Major R.A.M.C.
that branch which affected surveyed chiefly—drainage and water supply schemes had been suspended, road-making had been delayed and there had been a cessation of building operations in most districts. In the more direct work of public health, that affecting medical officers of health and sanitary inspectors—there had been a similar state of affairs. At an early stage the Local Government Board issued a circular to local authorities which amounted to a demand to reduce work to its lowest possible limit. Even in smaller organisations which formerly helped public work there had been a general skimming of effort. Road conferences, sanitary congresses, training and to be planning meetings, and the activities of many other associations, had to be abandoned for the time being. There was thus an accumulation of arrears which would require to be overtaken as soon as the opportunities arose for doing so.

It was too early to predict what the actual result upon the health of the public would be, but there had already been one indication of falling away in the line of least resistance, namely, infantile mortality. The recent Order for the compulsory notification of measles might be taken as a sign that, even in those distressful times, it had been felt necessary to take this step in order to prevent an alarming increase in the death rate of infants. There could be no question that this increase was due in a great measure to the slackening in the general efforts to ensure public health.

AFTER THE WAR

With regard to the after effects of the war, the general conditions likely to prevail after the declaration of peace were: (a) A great influx of male labour into all the ordinary channels of occupation; (b) a number of people who have held temporary appointments during the war will be thrown out of employment; (c) a great increase in the demand for labour in connection with the work of repairing the wasting of war, combined with a possible shortage of male labour; (d) adverse financial conditions which are likely to impede all kinds of public work. The great influx of labour to be expected when the arms were released from service must have its effect upon public appointments. There was likely to be a great number of men, some of them invalids or partly so, who would be seeking employment, and the work of public authorities would be one avenue open to them. Public sympathy would be an important factor in favour of the employment of such men, and those from the Front would be welcomed among them wherever their appointment was justified. It should, however, be noted that employment of people who had not been actually trained would be in opposition to the aims and objects of most organised associations. Prior to the war, much had been done in the way of organising public work, and admission to most organisations had only been obtained after special training and education. Even allowing for the extraordinary conditions which had arisen from the war, it was still believed officials to maintain this position as far as was reasonable, and such organisations might lend assistance in preventing the excessive employment of unskilled labour.

The effects of the war were principally local, and the municipal authorities did not find much difficulty in arranging for the work.

The elections were held on the understanding that they were to be held at the earliest possible time after the war, but the effect would be further helped in the market by the introduction of a Board of Trade order. Some relief would probably be found in the fact that there would also be a great demand for labour in connection with the work of repairing the wasting of war. A great increase would be given to all the manufacturing industries. The increase of those countries that had been devastated would be partly offset by the fact that their former trade would be revived, and the rivalry between the different national products in the forces of arms would be continued with renewed vigour. In the British Empire there would be a tendency for wages to rise, which would be counteracted by the opening of new markets and the desire to consume the trade of the Empire. In the end the trade of the country would be balanced which could only take its outlet in the wide expanse of the British Colonies and Dependencies.
It also had to be remembered that although there would be a great demand for new labour it would be accompanied by a comparative shortage in men on account of the losses through the war. It was probable, therefore, that the demand for labour in trade and commercial circles would be such as to prevent any undue competition arising in the ranks of public officials. Financial considerations were also likely to affect the work of public authorities. It was well known that during the war attempts had been made to keep expenditure as low as possible, and public officials had borne their share in doing this. Often, however, it had been done at the expense of work which in ordinary circumstances would be considered necessary, and in other cases only by postponing until a later time work which should have been executed without delay. Although this had resulted in a great amount of public work getting into arrear, the state of public finance after the war was likely to continue to hinder work for some time in the interest of national economy. An indirect result that might be looked for would be a broader public spirit among men returning from the war. Public opinion in the past had always played an important part in maintaining public health work, and in this connection nothing was likely to appeal more strongly to the British people than the fact that the war had simply justified all previous efforts in the interest of public health. It was not possible at present to give figures as to actual health statistics of His Majesty's Forces, but it was already known that the results would prove that the Army Medical Corps, with its attendant nursing and sanitary complements, had played a very important part in maintaining the health and efficiency of the Army. The immunity of the troops from typhoid fever, the excellent arrangements made for food supply and the efforts to secure pure and wholesome food, even under most trying conditions, were all elements which would help to teach future generations that public health work was worth maintaining, and that whatever sacrifices may have been made by Britain the protection of public health could not be given up lightly. Summarising the foregoing remarks, it might be expected that for a few years after the war public health work might lag somewhat from the pressure of public financial questions, but once these conditions had been overcome, as they would be overcome by British dogged perseverance, the various departments of public health work would take a renewed lease of life and would probably win greater triumphs still in the beneficent work of uplifting humanity.

Mr. D. Roberts proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Phillips for his paper.

Mr. Glentt, in seconding, said many of the problems raised by the war had to be faced while the war was in progress and could not be left till the close of hostilities. For that reason such gatherings as that Association held were important, because they furnished opportunities for an interchange of opinions and experience which was of great assistance to those present. They should be an abnegation in their efforts for sanitation. The camps, the billeting of troops in the towns and other matters had furnished fresh problems for those engaged in sanitary work to cope with. They all knew of the circular of the Local Government Board as to economy, but he did not think that was meant to suggest that work really necessary for public health should not be done. True economy was economy in the life and health of the nation, and the Local Government Board had given them an example of that in the recent Order for the compulsory notification of measles, even in those abnormal times.

The motion was heartily carried, and Mr. Ward was also thanked for reading the paper.

At the close of the meeting Alderman Miles invited those present to tea, and he was cordially thanked for his hospitality, on the motion of Mr. Woolman.