

Annotations.

DR. ALFRED CARPENTER ON PUBLIC MEDICINE.

Dr. Carpenter recently delivered an address in public medicine before the members of the British Medical Association. We have no doubt our readers would find it highly interesting and instructive, but it is very lengthy and space will not permit us to give it in full, we give however, below, lengthy extracts. Dr. Carpenter reminded us that "it is scarcely more than forty years since the first national platform was established upon which satisfactory observations could be made, and successful operations carried on, in the cause of preventive medicine." The statistics prepared by Dr. Farr had been the true pioneers of sanitary work. He acknowledged the excellence and greatness of the work done by the older sanitarians. But gradually "the facts brought to light by Farr's tables," the knowledge gained of excessive mortality obtaining "in defined districts, among defined classes, and at particular epochs of their lives," and the invaluable papers "prepared by, or at the suggestion of, one who deserves as much of his country as any living man—viz., John Simon," led to numerous legislative measures, of varying value and efficiency, but culminating in the passing of a measure making the appointment of medical officers of health compulsory upon all local sanitary authorities. "We have now, a sanitary organization established by law for the repression of disease, which, however, is still imperfect in this most important respect—that the only information which a medical officer of health receives officially at present is, that disease of an infectious character has been fatal in a given place some time previously. This information is conveyed to him many days or even weeks after the events, and he finds, on inquiry, that the *materies morbi* has already been spread far and wide; that the contagia which have been produced by that case have been passed into the public sewer, the nearest watercourse, or other receptacle for human excreta, and, as a consequence, have most likely multiplied indefinitely. It is also probable that many cases of the same kind occurred before one was fatal, and that no efficient steps were taken to localise or circumscribe the effects of the disease in that locality. It is more than probable that if the proper officer could have had information of the first appearance of that disease in the locality the general distribution of its contagious particles would have been prevented, and the people saved some of the consequences