

advocate the systematic, practical training of teachers to enable them to give rational instruction in schools on the laws of health, including the demonstration of the physical evils caused by drinking. At the same time, the Committee cannot lose sight of the enormous improvement which has been effected in some countries, and might be effected in this country, by wise legislation.

Food and Cookery.

For the purpose of bringing home to the people the importance of properly selected and carefully prepared food, there is much room for training of a socially educative character among girls and young women.

Still-births.

Still-births should be registered.

Employment of Women in Factories.

The Committee do not think that the period during which employment after confinement is prohibited could be extended without counterbalancing disadvantages. But the law should certainly be strengthened, so as to place upon the employer the burden of obtaining proof that the required period has elapsed since the confinement of the women he employs, or, in the alternative, so as to prohibit future employment in the absence of (1) a medical certificate that it will not be prejudicial to their physical well-being, and (2) proof that reasonable provision is made for the care of their infants. This might take the form of a crèche, or be secured by the recognition for the purpose of a duly licensed body of women.

Feeding of Infants.

The Committee are impressed with the enormous sacrifice of infant life due to insufficient or improper feeding. The ultimate remedy lies in that social education already described, and the Committee advocate the systematic instruction, in continuation classes, of girls in the processes of infant feeding and management. They also recommend the issue to mothers in every district of leaflets on the rearing of babies similar to those used in Sheffield and Wakefield; this could be done by the municipality, by voluntary associations, or by the registrar on the registration of every infant.

Sterilisation and Refrigeration.

Having regard to the acute difference of medical opinion as to the effects of sterilisation, the Committee recommend an investigation into the whole subject by a small body of experts. Milk, when drawn from the cow, should at once be refrigerated to a temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

Midwives.

The Committee desire to call the attention of local authorities to the provisions of the Midwives' Act, 1902, which may be made an instrument of the greatest utility for the dissemination among mothers of proper knowledge and practical advice.

Training of Mothers—Health Associations.

While laying special stress on the need for education of the young in matters of hygiene and domestic economy, the Committee believe even more may be done in the direction of training the mothers of the present generation in these matters.

Cookery, Hygiene, and Domestic Economy.

Instruction in these matters should, as far as possible, be made compulsory on the elder girls at school, and care should be taken that it is placed in the hands of properly-qualified teachers, to which end it is expedient that some State aid should be given under proper conditions to schools of cookery at which

teachers are trained, and that hygiene in its various branches should be made an essential element in the course of training for all teachers.

Medical Inspection of School Children.

The Committee are emphatic in recommending that a systematised medical inspection of children at school should be imposed as a public duty on every school authority, and they agree with the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland) that a contribution towards the cost should be made out of the Parliamentary Vote.

Feeding of Elementary School Children.

The Committee recommend that definite provision should be made by the various local authorities for dealing with the question of underfed children. They also suggest safeguards against economic abuse.

Crèches.

Wherever it was thought desirable, owing to the employment of married women in factories, or for other reasons, to establish municipal crèches, girls over fourteen might be made to attend occasionally, and the teaching of infant management to such girls should be eligible for aid from the grant for public education.

Syphilis.

The Committee recommend the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry into the prevalence and effects of syphilis, having special regard to the possibility of making the disease notifiable, and to the adequacy of hospital accommodation for its treatment.

Teeth, Eyes, and Ears.

The Committee are of opinion that the care of the teeth should receive special attention in the teaching of the elements of hygiene in schools, that daily cleansing of the teeth should be enforced by both parents and teachers, and that systematic inspection of the teeth, eyes, and ears of school children should be undertaken as part of that general medical inspection which has already been recommended.

In Conclusion.

The Committee, in conclusion, do not rely upon any large measure of legislative assistance for the rectification of acknowledged evils. The pathway to improvement, they believe, lies in other directions.

Complacent optimism and administrative indifference must be attacked and overcome, and a large-hearted sentiment of public interest take the place of timorous counsels and sectional prejudice.

We have devoted considerable space to this report because the maintenance of the physical health of the nation is a matter in which nurses are directly concerned. Further, the Committee's recommendations clearly bring out the fact that the health of the nation is dependent largely upon the efficiency of its women, and show that consideration and money devoted to their education for the important duties which devolve upon them are time and money well spent.

We note with pleasure the recommendation as to the systematic medical inspection of school children. While nurses have done excellent work in connection with the children in our elementary schools, we have always considered that they are in a false position if this work is not under medical supervision. The diagnosis and treatment of disease is no part of a nurse's work.

The effect of the recommendations of the Committee, if carried out, must be to improve the national health, and, therefore, the national wealth.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)