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Editorial.

OPEN-AIR SCHOOLS.

All the best things in life are those which are the free gifts of Nature. Sunshine, fresh air, light, water are, under natural conditions, free and accessible to all. But as a result of civilisation, and especially of the conditions of life in large towns and cities, we deprive the children in our elementary schools of the fresh air and sunshine which, in common with growing plants, they need for healthy development, and congregate them during school hours within close schoolrooms to the manifest disadvantage of teachers and taught, and at no small risk of the spread of zymotic diseases.

Last summer a very successful open-air school was maintained for thirteen weeks at Bostal Wood under the authority of the London County Council at which 272 selected anæmic and weakly children were received. The results were so satisfactory that three similar schools are to be opened this year, at Burleigh House, Forest Hill; Shrewsbury House, Shooter's Hill; and at Montpelier House, Kentish Town. A great difficulty has been to secure suitable open-air sites, as the London County Council is debarred from using its own parks, which are limited to public use, and it will have to pay rent for the sites secured.

Each of the three schools, which will be certified under the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act of 1899, will provide instruction for seventy-five children, and the Council has made a grant of £2,000 to cover the expense. But this does not include the feeding of the children, and the Council is appealing to those members of the public who are in sympathy with its experiment for the betterment of anæmic and debilitated children to assist in this respect. It in no

way desires to minimise parental responsibility, but it is proved that many parents who are capable of and willing to provide ordinary food for their children cannot pay for the special diet necessary at the open-air schools, and it is estimated that parents' payments must be supplemented to the extent of £500 this year. Last year the parents contributed about a third of the total amount needed. A Fund for the purpose of supplementing parents' payments has been opened, and subscriptions may be sent to Messrs. Hoare & Co., 37, Fleet Street, E.C.

There are none who will welcome more heartily the action of the London County Council than the nurses working in its schools, who know only too well the debilitated condition of many of the children who attend them. They realise that it is futile to expect a sickly and delicate child to apply itself with the best results to the acquisition of knowledge, that the healthy brain is to be found in the healthy body, and that it is beginning at the wrong end to stimulate the brains of ill-nourished and debilitated children whose physical condition is urgently in need of attention.

The establishment by the London County Council of these out-door schools which we hope are the forerunners of others is scientifically and hygienically sound, and it was to be expected that the report of the Educational Adviser to the Council should show that the results of attendance at the Bostal School, both as regards health and physical improvement, were satisfactory, whether judged from the appearance and demeanour of the children, the detailed notes of their progress, or the statistical tables relating to their physical condition.

Similarly satisfactory results have been attained in Germany at Charlottenburg, as well as in Elberfeld, and other towns.

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