

OPEN AIR SCHOOLS.

By DR. ALICE VOWE JOHNSON,
F.R.C.S.I., D.P.H. Cantab.,

Med. Off. Lambeth Poor Law Schools, M.O. Central Foundation School and Kennington Secondary School, and Cripples' Hostel, Camberwell, formerly Assistant M.O. L.C.C. Education Board and M.O. Birley House Open Air School.

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The school has many pets—newts, tadpoles, water beetles, dragon-fly larvæ, and sticklebacks. In connection with these a great tragedy happened. The Lady Stickleback, following her family tradition, ate her husband, and we have to draw a veil over the explanations offered by the teacher from a humanitarian point of view. They also have chickens, ducks and rabbits, a puppy dog, and, last but not least, a real live baby, who, reversing the old nursery rhyme, has so many fathers and mothers he doesn't know what to do.

The baby was four months old when it came, and the trained nurse taught the children how to feed, bath, and make clothes for it. It, also, lived out of doors all day and thrived well. The children loved it, and it loved the children.

Vegetable nature study is shown by the development of seeds, plants, flowers, and fruit. The usual bean and acorn were made to grow in bottles.

The staff consists of a Head Teacher, three Assistant Teachers, a trained Hospital Nurse, a cook, a caretaker, and a visiting school doctor who looks in once a fortnight, or oftener if sent for.

The children are weighed and measured once a fortnight, and have hot baths once or twice a week. Their hæmoglobin (that is, the colour of their blood) is taken at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the six months.

The Schools are open all the year round with no break.

Our results have been excellent. The average gain per child in weight is 5-6 lb., and the gain of hæmoglobin is an increase of 20 per cent. The moral and intellectual improvement is equally satisfactory.

The children are seen before admission into the schools by the school doctor, and only such admitted as will benefit by an open air treatment. Advanced cases of heart and lung trouble, rheumatism, and bad eye cases are excluded, as they tend to get worse in an open air school.

All cases of defective teeth, enlarged tonsils, adenoids, discharging ears and defective vision, are recommended for treatment and operation before admission into the schools, and in many cases this has been carried out. It is of little use admitting children to these schools when their noses and throats are blocked with adenoids and tonsils, and when they have a mouth full of decaying teeth, and are being debilitated by discharging ears.

The children are again medically examined shortly after admission, and careful notes made of the conditions of their hearts, lungs, the colour of their blood, and the condition of their urine.

I must here point out how necessary it is to test the urine of the children, as 20 per cent. of them are found to be suffering from Albuminuria. Careful dieting, warmth, and dryness are essential for these cases. One of our worst cases of this gained 7 lb. in weight and 30 per cent. of hæmoglobin, as the result of this careful treatment.

Frequent examinations of the children's chests and blood are made. The Teachers and Nurse notified as to diet, exercise, warmth and rest.

The Shooter's Hill School is splendidly situated, being on the top of a wooded hill with a fine view of Kent and the winding Thames.

The Kentish Town and Forest Hill Schools are simply adapted houses with large gardens.

Satisfactory as our results have been, they would be even more so, if the children slept the nights at these fresh open air schools, instead of returning every night to their stuffy insanitary homes. Very little further expense would be incurred, as no extra food would be required, and their tram fares, which amount to a considerable item, would be saved, and the hammocks they sleep in during the day would serve them for the night, with the addition of an extra rug. On fine nights they could sleep in the open, and in bad weather in the Doecker Sheds, with which each school is provided. All that would be necessary in addition would be a night attendant.

The Doecker Sheds are of canvas, portable, impervious to rain, with windows, and one removable open side, they are light and inexpensive. When new they cost £120, and hold 50 to 60 children. As there are in London alone some 35,000 to 40,000 debilitated children who should be in these open air schools, the question of building permanent schools will have to be considered.

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