

Scientific Instruction in Hygiene for Women at Bedford College, London.

By T. M. LEGG, M.A., M.D., D.P.H.,

H.M. Medical Inspector of Factories.

The course of scientific instruction in hygiene given at Bedford College, London, was started in 1895, in consequence of the feeling that in the future women would be able to find a useful sphere of work, either as sanitary inspectors under local authorities, or as factory inspectors.

Already at that time the Factory Department of the Home Office had on its staff a woman inspector, and more than one vestry in London and a few of the large towns in England had appointed women as sanitary inspectors. With the passing of the Factory and Workshops Act, 1895, by which the sanitary control of workshops was placed in the hands of the District Councils, it was felt that it would become necessary for them to appoint a woman as inspector of those workshops in which women alone were employed. The inspectors who had been appointed in the first instance were no doubt selected on account of the special knowledge they possessed of the subject in question, but were more such appointments to be made it was evident that some previous training on scientific lines should be required of the candidates. In any new office the duties must necessarily be ill-defined, and the person appointed is expected to fill in the details and develop the work in one direction and another. To do this the inspector must have knowledge to inspire her with confidence and to appreciate the direction in which development is possible.

This was the opportunity seized upon by the Council of Bedford College to provide the necessary training, and it can with truth be said that nowhere is there provided so comprehensive and thorough a course in the various subjects bearing on hygiene. The course extends over a year, and includes lectures and practical work in hygiene, physiology and bacteriology, chemistry, physics and meteorology. Each of the principal subjects is dealt with by a separate lecturer. In addition, in connection with the lectures on hygiene, visits are paid to places of interest from a public health point of view. Already the students in this way have had opportunities of seeing the filter-beds and works of the West Middlesex and East London Water Companies, the ventilation and drainage arrangements of the Houses of Parliament, the ventilating arrangements in the new operating theatres of St. George's Hospital, Rowton House, and various model dwellings, the Somers Town and Clare Market insanitary areas, a disinfecting station, the precipitation works and sewage farm at Weybridge,

the dairy farms of Messrs. Welford and the Express Dairy Company, and the Parkes' and Hornsey Museums of sanitary apparatus, &c.

Hygiene, however, is not a science in itself, but is rather the point where several exact sciences, widely distinct from one another, meet and yield up that element they possess which can be of practical use in the prevention of disease and the preservation of health. Physiology is included in the course, as only by it can a student gain a knowledge of the vital processes constantly going on in health, and be in a position to appreciate the effect of the changes brought about in them owing to disease. Taken in their widest sense, chemistry and physics may be regarded as the foundation of the edifice of hygiene, as they include almost all the varied subjects with which hygiene deals. It is impossible to appreciate properly what is meant by the term "closeness of the air" without a knowledge of chemistry, or what is meant by "ventilation" without the knowledge of the elementary laws of physics. In that branch of medicine or hygiene known as bacteriology recent discoveries by Pasteur, Koch, and others, as to the dependence of health on the action of microbic life, all tend to show that the evil effect of certain bacteria is to be attributed rather to definite chemical poisons prepared by them than to the organisms themselves.

But whether it be in the work of making inquiry as to the cause of illness, or in the carrying out of disinfection after infectious disease, or in the disposal of refuse, or what not, the inspector is at every turn brought face to face with facts which can only be appreciated in their true light by a person who has had some scientific training. Although sanitary inspectors are as a rule under the Medical Officer of Health, the Council of Bedford College has wisely provided that their knowledge need not be a minus quantity, and that they need not become mere machines to carry out the wishes of the superior officer; on the contrary, it is recognised by the Bedford College course that the more complete the training, the better and the more rationally does the Council think inspectors will fulfil the duties of their office.

One of the most delightful features of hygiene is that the knowledge gained from studying it enables the student to understand, and places her in a position to cope with, many of the social questions of the day. Every occupation in life exacts some toil from the health of the individual exercising it, and hence arises the wide field of industrial disease. It is with them that the factory inspector is largely occupied, and the application of hygienic laws to industrial conditions has led to the saving of many lives.

A knowledge of the effect of overcrowding in lowering the vitality of people living under such insanitary conditions is the best means of securing

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