

Annotations.

THE SCHOOL EDUCATION OF BABIES.

The Board of Education has issued a most interesting report made by its women inspectors—Miss Munday, Miss Bathurst, Miss Collis, Miss Heale, and Miss Harrington—on children under five in public elementary schools. For the purposes of inquiry the inspectors have visited schools in all parts of the country. It is not surprising to learn from the introductory memorandum of Mr. Cyril Jackson, the Chief Inspector of Elementary Schools, that the inspectors agree that the mechanical teaching in many infant schools seems to dull rather than awaken the little power of imagination which these infants possess. Children admitted later can in six months or a year reach the same standard of attainment as those who have been in school for two years previously. The rigidity of the discipline is also commented upon. It is unnatural for babies under five to be sitting still for the greater part of the day. There is little doubt in the minds of all the inspectors that these little children should have no formal instruction in the three R's. They must learn to talk before they learn to read, to understand before they learn numbers by heart. Kindergarten methods are condemned as being contrary to the spirit of Froebel when taught mechanically to large classes. It is suggested that if children have good homes and careful mothers they should be discouraged from attendance at school up to the age of five, and that a new form of school in which no formal instruction is given is required for the poorer class of children.

THE MAN IN BLUE.

Outside the City Boundaries the area of the Metropolis which is under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police extends over a radius of fifteen miles from Charing Cross to Colney Hatch on the north, Todworth Heath in the south, Lark Hill in the east, and Staines Moor on the west, only one boundary being in the county of Middlesex, the others being in Hertfordshire and Essex respectively. To police this area there are employed 25 superintendents, 487 inspectors, 1,919 sergeants, and 12,502 constables, the mean rateable value of the property under their control being over £49,000,000, while the actual value is impossible to estimate. Statistics are illuminating or dull, according to the point of view. For those who

care to delve into such records, the annual return of the Commissioner of Police will afford interesting reading. During 1904 the number of summonses issued was 33,138, an increase of 3,131 over 1903, and 30,822 convictions were obtained; 10,384 persons were injured in the streets, a number which exceeded those of the two previous years, but there was no increase in the number of fatal accidents, which amounted to 155. Compare this with the accidents in the United States, where in a recent period of four months in New York and its vicinity 793 persons were injured by automobiles alone, and sixty-two killed, and the last report of the Interstate Commerce Commission shows that 3,787 people were killed in that country on railroads alone, 3,367 of these being employes. In addition to this, 51,343 persons were injured.

In the Metropolitan area there were 126,530 arrests, but it is satisfactory to note that the increase of 1,976 over the previous year was for minor offences. There was a decrease in offences against stage and hackney carriage regulations, for common assault, and for gaming in public places. There is also a decrease in attempts at suicide, burglary, housebreaking, horse-stealing, and larceny. Also, only 390 persons were sentenced to terms of penal servitude as against 412 in the previous year.

For offences under the Motor Car Act, 2,010 summonses were issued, and 1,817 convictions obtained.

How many people who, night and day, go about their business in the Metropolis with safety, give a thought to their indebtedness to the man in blue. As a patient figure at street corners, attentive and obliging, we take him as a matter of course as the regulator of traffic, while his skill even in this respect excites the admiration of our continental neighbours. Still more worthy of respect is the manner in which with ceaseless vigilance he maintains order in a city which is the refuge of anarchists and desperate characters of all descriptions. For a most modest wage he is prepared to defend our homes and risk his life with the greatest stoicism, and if sometimes he lingers longer than is absolutely necessary on the area steps when Mary Jane is more than ordinarily attractive, after all this but proves that his official sternness is largely assumed, and that under the dark blue coat or mackintosh cape beats a warm heart, instinct with that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin.

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