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Editorial.

THE POOR LAW CHILD.

Nurses who are concerned with the care of children in elementary schools, in which schools 2,532 Poor Law children in London, and 15,253 in the provinces are now receiving their education, should study the report presented by Dr. Macnamara, as Parliamentary Secretary of the Local Government Board on the Treatment of Children under the Poor Law.

Dr. Macnamara says:—"In studying the case of the Poor Law child, I have been profoundly impressed with the fact that here the character of the supervision is more potential for good or evil than in any other department of human affairs to which I have given attention. You may purchase a park at great cost and dot it with beautiful villa cottage homes regardless of expense. But if your guardians are careless in their selection of officers and teachers, and if your visiting committees are perfunctory and formal in the discharge of their duties, the chances are that much of your expenditure will have been wasted. On the other hand you may cheaply house and maintain your Poor Law children in what has been contumeliously described as a 'barrack school'; and yet if your officers and teachers are chosen with care and circumspection, and if the members of your visiting committees keep in constant and unannounced touch with the teachers and the schools, stimulating them with the fresh atmosphere of the outside world, encouraging them by the display of real personal interest and sympathy, and assisting them with wise counsel, the fruits of your efforts may and probably will be entirely beneficent."

No child in the community needs more personal interest and sympathy than the

one who, deprived of his natural guardians, is brought up by the State. It has done much for these children that workhouse schools have been practically abolished, only 40 children in London, and 525 in the provinces being now educated by this method. The mixing of workhouse children with those in happier circumstances in their school life in these public elementary schools must bring them into touch with the outer world in a wholesome and natural way, and thus to minimise the institutional stamp which in former days was so prejudicial to their welfare when they first went out into the world and were heavily handicapped by being launched into what was to them practically an unknown country.

When in her work in the elementary schools a nurse is brought into contact with a Poor Law child, let her specially remember the influence for good, which it is in her power to exercise, and that human interest and kindness can nowhere be better bestowed, or will be more appreciated. As flowers need warmth and sunshine for their full development so children need to be surrounded by affection and humanising influences if they are not to grow up stunted and maimed morally and mentally, and anything a nurse can do to bring such an atmosphere into the life of a child is good work. An instance of the way in which children respond to wholesome influences is evidenced by the satisfactory results which have followed the emigration of children to Canada. This policy was instituted in 1883, since which time over 7,000 children have been emigrated, mostly to Canada.

The keynote of Dr. Macnamara's report is the value of personal influence. Let us never forget it when brought into contact with the Poor Law child.

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