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Editorial.

THE WORK OF SCHOOL NURSES.

There is no department of nursing at the present time which seems capable of greater development in the immediate future than the care of school children, for it is certain that the result of their medical inspection will be to demonstrate the need for a large increase in the number of nurses employed in school nursing. The new circular just issued by the Board of Education recognises this, and the willingness of the Board is expressed in it to sanction any well considered scheme for the employment of school nurses, and for the establishment of school surgeries or clinics for the treatment of ringworm, dental caries, and diseases of the eye and ear, such as already exist in Germany, for the further and more scientific examination of defects which cannot be satisfactorily dealt with on the school premises.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that it is beginning at the wrong end to attempt to instil knowledge into school children, who are cold and hungry, or who are suffering from physical defects in connection with the eyes, ears, or teeth, conditions which are often present.

Education is important, but sound health is still more so, and this is recognised by the Educational Authority. The problem, which is not an easy one, is how best attention may be given to the children's health, without lessening the sense of parental responsibility, and the self-respecting independence, which it is so important to conserve.

One clause of the Board of Education's memorandum seems to point to the desire of the Board for the establishment of baths for the use of school children; "baths, with the necessary accompaniments of soap, sponges, towels, &c., should be utilised,

not merely for the immediate and obvious purposes of cleansing the bodies of children, but also as a humanising influence and as the means of inducing habits and instincts of cleanliness and of inculcating practical lessons in the value of personal hygiene and in self-respect."

The question of an adequate supply of hot water in the homes of the poor is always a difficult one, more especially in the congested districts of great cities, where in the one-room tenements the water must be boiled a kettleful at a time on a small open grate for all domestic purposes. Under these circumstances it is not surprising if the children are frequently bathed—if, indeed, this ceremony is not omitted altogether—in the "nice soap-suddy water" in which the family washing has been done. No doubt this is better than nothing, but the practice, nevertheless, leaves much to be desired.

In ancient Rome the value of public baths, and of a supply of an ample amount of water per head to the population for purposes of ablution, was well recognised. With increased civilisation we have become more niggardly in this respect; nevertheless, the inculcation of personal cleanliness by precept and practice lays the foundation of many virtues besides cleanliness, including refinement and self-respect; and anything which can be done to instil into children a habit which shall remain with them in after life, is certainly a meritorious deed. In this, school nurses can assist, for in their visits to the homes of the children they can explain to the mothers its importance, and co-operate with them in their efforts to keep the children clean and wholesome.

In connection with the school attendance of children below the age of five, the Consultative Committee, which has been considering the question, while recognising that given satisfactory conditions a child of

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)