

Medical Matters.

HYGIENIC INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS.

Among the many interesting papers read at the International Congress on Tuberculosis, to which we have so far been unable to refer, was one by Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs, who said that in order to control tuberculosis it will be necessary to rely in the last instance upon education.

Hospitals, sanatoria, Dispensaries, camps may have great influence in alleviating or even curing those already infected with tuberculosis or other infectious diseases, but their influence in checking the spread of that disease is to be found in education as to necessary precautions and the proper manner of life. These institutions, therefore, become schools in which hygiene is taught to their inmates. These, for the most part, are people already infected, though this educative influence extends to some friends and visitors of inmates, and so reaches those who are still well. But both of these classes, the inmates and their friends, belong to the adult population, those with conceptions and habits already formed, who take in new ideas less readily than more youthful minds. They belong to a generation which is passing rather than to a generation which is coming, and for these reasons these institutions have less effect upon the final solution of the tuberculosis problem than if their influence or that of other institutions could be directed upon the more youthful members of the community, the boys and girls of to-day, who constitute the coming generation of workers and of parents.

The public schools, academies, and colleges are a series of institutions which are moulding the growing intelligence of the country, their pupils of to-day will be the men and women of to-morrow, and if in them the same kind of instruction in hygiene could be given in a practical, effective, and convincing manner, as is given to the patients in sanatoria, they would be sending out into the world a youth ready for the emergencies of life and with an understanding of how to avoid the preventable diseases. Until the schools make provision for this kind of teaching, it cannot be hoped to cope successfully with tuberculosis and the other infectious diseases. The teaching for the younger classes should be directed largely to the formation of automatic habits of hygiene, a love of cleanliness and neatness and the things of out-of-doors, and should proceed in daily lessons until every pupil at graduation should have as complete mastery of the fundamental rules of health as he has of spelling, reading, or arithmetic. New text

books must be written, and teachers and school authorities with these new ideas found.

Never will the suppression of the preventable diseases be secured until the coming generation rather than the passing one is instructed in the proper methods to be pursued.

THE CONTAGION OF LEPROSY.

The fact that leprosy is contagious, but not hereditary, was, says the *Lancet*, proved by the Commission in India, and this view is further supported by Dr. Kuhne, of the Leper House, Tungkun, South China, who asked 167 lepers, and found that 56 had a clean family history. In three cases a great-grandfather was a leper, in another a grandmother, in 13 a brother and sister, in five the father or mother, in six although the parents were affected it was easy to trace how the disease was communicated. The most striking case was that of a leper whose father became infected at 80 years of age; he had lived with his son, who had been ill 12 years, without taking any precautions. The two drugs which have been found of any service are alphozone and nastin. The former is the favourite drug of the lepers, and, in addition to its value as an intestinal antiseptic in the cases of dyspepsia, diarrhoea, and dysentery (which are usually of bad omen and a sign that the intestine is affected), it seems also to exert a tonic influence. Injections of nastin in cases of nerve leprosy have, on the whole, effected an improvement, though it has not been a uniformly successful drug. In several cases the injections were followed by headache and giddiness. Leprosy exists all over China, not to any great extent in the North, but in Central and South China it is frequently met with. While lepers in most places are allowed to roam free, there are settlements here and there in which they are segregated, but never strictly so. The native sovereign remedy for the disease consists of the leaves of *Xanthium strumarium*. The Chinese describe five different forms of leprosy. In one the skin dies, indicated by loss of sensation; in the second the flesh dies and no pain is felt in cutting it; in the third the blood dies and ulceration and pus are formed; in the fourth the tendons die and hands and feet drop off; in the fifth the bones die, the nose is destroyed, and the eyes, throat, and lips become involved. They ascribe as causes, climate, infection, defective nutrition, and the air of graves.

From the earliest ages, leprosy has been one of the most dreaded, as well as the most mysterious of diseases. When science finds a remedy the discoverer will confer an untold benefit on humanity.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)