

to them to find their paid officers represented as everything that is perfect, and their rôle assigned to them that of drags on the wheel of the triumphal-car of progress; particularly when most members of country hospital committees take a deep and active interest in the welfare of the institution with which they are connected.

Medical Matters.

SCHOOL MEDICAL TREATMENT.

The Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, reviewed extensively in the *British Medical Journal*, points out that the Act of 1907 gives power to local authorities to provide medical treatment if they think fit, and for this purpose to co-operate with voluntary agencies if by so doing it seems to them they can effect their purpose and yet avoid laying a burden on the rates. The responsibility of sanctioning any such schemes is thrown on the Board, and before sanctioning any substantial outlay on specific medical treatment it must be assured that the authority is really attempting to grapple with treatment in a broad and scientific way, and existing machinery must be utilised so far as possible before new agencies are created. Acting on these principles, most of the authorities have referred all cases of disease or defect in the first place to a private medical practitioner, for though it is the duty of the authority to find out what children require treatment, it is that of the parent to obtain it. The real problem at present facing the local authorities is:—(1) What is to be done when treatment is required which cannot be provided by an ordinary medical man? (2) What is to be done for those who cannot afford the expense of treatment? (3) What is to be done for children whose parents are irresponsible or indifferent on the subject? On these points no opinion is offered.

The work done by School Nurses partakes to some extent of the nature of treatment; but it throws a good deal of work into the hands of private practitioners, even if these are directly included in the local authority's scheme. Certain schemes have not been sanctioned by the Board because the supervision of the nurse by the school medical officer when treating children for minor ailments did not seem adequate. The Board has required that in all cases treatment by nurses shall be confined to ailments such as ringworm, vermin, and superficial sores, though in a limited number of cases it has approved the inclusion

of other conditions, such as conjunctivitis, discharging ears, and slight accidents.

When the services of a specialist, such as an ophthalmologist, are utilised, he may be regarded as part of the school medical staff. Schemes for providing spectacles free of charge have only been sanctioned when it has been shown to be impossible for the child to secure them through its parents or from voluntary associations, and when care is taken to secure adequate examination and proper prescription by medical men of suitable experience.

THE PHYSICAL CARE OF CHILDREN.

Much interest has been taken, says the Vienna correspondent of the *Lancet*, in the meetings of a committee appointed by the Ministry of Education for the purpose of discussing the best methods of preventing the physical deterioration so noticeable amongst school children in the present day. When it was asserted by competent authorities a few years ago that the physical condition of the rising generation was not satisfactory much alarm was caused. These assertions were made with reference not only to Austria but to several other European States as well. The idea of conducting a scientific investigation of this problem was at once accepted by the then Minister of Education, Baron Gautsch, and it was his efforts mainly which caused the adoption of gymnastics as a regular exercise in the higher schools.

A valuable suggestion was made by several teachers of gymnastics, who recommended open-air sports and running as opposed to the present method of gymnastics in the Turnhalle, or room fitted up with ladders, ropes, and bars with which the children perform various evolutions.

The procedure to which most importance was attached, and justly so, was reliable, repeated, and early examination of all school children by specially appointed medical officers. When it is considered that in Vienna alone there are 250,000 children in schools, and that about 26 per cent. of them are underfed and without the benefit of pure air, it is evident that the first requisite is to supply pure air and pure food in sufficient quantities for them, and then to consider how to improve their development by bodily exercise. The outcome of the meeting was a resolution, addressed to the Ministry of Education, in which all the points mentioned above were elucidated, and financial support for the efforts which the committee is making was requested. As the recommendations will be carried into effect in a short time the physical development of the school children will no doubt be materially improved.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)