

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,167.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 13, 1910.

XLV.

Editorial.

THE MEDICAL INSPECTION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

At the third International Congress of School Hygiene Mrs. Cloudesley Brereton presented a most interesting paper dealing with the medical inspection of school children, which, as she pointed out, is not only a new subject but embodies a new ideal as to education as a whole—*i.e.*, the idea that education deals with bodies as well as minds, and that as minds cannot be sent to school to be taught while bodies stay at home to be cared for, educational authorities must officially recognise the body.

The following points were insisted on by the speaker :

1. The co-operation of the mothers of the children of every school must be enlisted; they must learn to realise that medical inspection is not designed in order to relieve them of responsibility, but to help them to fulfil their own responsibilities, and that the work of the school doctor and the mother must go hand in hand, or much of the expense and experience of medical inspection will be useless. It would be worse than useless if the mother thought that because the child was medically inspected at school that the laws of health could be disregarded in the home.

2. The value of the work of voluntary educated social workers in visiting the homes of the children and explaining to the mothers the worth of the medical advice given, for which parents in a higher rank of life would have to pay a substantial fee; further that it is for the parents to give effect to this advice, or the treatment prescribed by the doctor will be useless. It must be brought home to parents that the doctor is the signpost pointing the way, the school nurse and the ladies' committee

guides on the way, but that the real passengers are the parents and children, and the destination the home; that, in fact, the whole crux of the matter rests with the mothers, with the breeding and early rearing of children.

3. Mrs. Brereton is careful to point out that the fact of fatherhood is an essential factor in the problem, and any system of race regeneration which ignores it is bound to be one-sided. But, nevertheless, it is true that the primary responsibility in the home rests largely with the mother, and it is therefore desirable to give simple lessons as to the best means of attaining cleanliness, cheap and wholesome methods of feeding, the necessity for adequate sleep, clean bedding, and open windows. In short, the sanitary conscience of the home must be aroused, so that less and less shall be wrong when the children shall arrive at school age.

4. A point referred to as of great value in maintaining efficient school inspection is that the school nurse should, where possible, keep a record for the doctor of those parents who did not accompany their children to the medical inspection, and subsequently visit them in their homes, giving precise and written directions as to what the doctor's orders were, and instructions as to how and when they should be carried out.

Lectures by the school doctor to parents once a term, on actual points which have come under his notice, are also spoken of as of great value, and the instruction of women students in the training colleges in the ideas and ideals of medical inspection, and the interdependence of home and school, body and mind, would, she believes, be of great influence for good in the present generation.

The paper is a most thoughtful survey of the whole question.

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