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EDITORIAL.

THE CHILD AS A NATIONAL ASSET.

"The European War has given new emphasis to the importance of the child as a primary National Asset."

The Annual Report of the Medical Department of the Board of Education presented by its Chief Medical Officer, Sir George Newman, which has just been published, deals exhaustively with the care of the child from earliest infancy till adolescence.

Hitherto the State has concerned itself only with the school years of the child, and this system has resulted in the school authorities having to deal with a large percentage of children already handicapped and permanently maimed when they come under their care. Take dental disease alone.

Sir George Newman says, "Probably not less than half the children (of school age) are in need of dental treatment. (No less than half a million urgently so)."

Again, "half a million children are so defective in eyesight as to be unable to take reasonable advantage of their lessons."

Then follows a list of diseases of the throat, ear and nose, skin disease, diseases of the heart, infectious disease, and tuberculosis.

He says, "The problem of dealing with them is not by any means simple, and its ramifications are numerous, intricate and far reaching

"They begin long before the child comes to school and continue long after he has left."

What is needed therefore under the existing circumstances and existing law, is an effective unification of all the powers having for their purpose the healthy upbringing of youth.

Secondly, he says, "The Education Authorities should have before them a clear view of the steps which are necessary from a medical point of view, in order to secure the full value of the school medical service to every child of school age in their area."

He defines the irreducible minimum which the nation requires as follows:—

1. That every child shall periodically come under direct medical and dental supervision, and if found defective shall be "followed up."

2. That every child found malnourished shall, somehow or other, be nourished; and every child found verminous shall, somehow or other, be cleansed.

3. That for every sick, diseased, or defective child skilled medical treatment shall be made available, either by the local education authority or otherwise.

4. That every child shall be educated in a well-ventilated school-room or class-room, or in some form of open-air school-room or class-room.

5. That every child shall have daily organised physical exercise of appropriate character.

6. That no child of school age shall be employed for profit except under approved conditions.

7. That the school environment and the means of education shall be such as can in no case exert unfavourable or injurious influence on the health, growth, and development of the child.

It is high time that the State awoke to its responsibilities towards the whole of the all-important years of child life. Prevention is better than cure, and far less costly, and the infant must be safeguarded from its birth.

Correspondingly, the anxious years of adolescence are, at present, precisely the

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