

THE SCHOOL NURSE.

One of the most interesting and important developments of civic and social service in connection with nursing is that of the work of the School Nurse, and no one is better able to "survey the duties and responsibilities of the nurse in the maintenance of health and physical perfection, and in the prevention of disease among school children," than Mrs. Struthers, R.N., who, as Miss Lina Rogers, was Superintendent of School Nurses, first in New York City, and afterwards at Toronto.

In a book bearing the name of "The School Nurse," published by Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 24, Bedford Street, Strand, London, W.C., price 9s. net, Mrs. Struthers deals with many aspects of school nursing from the point of view of the expert. As she herself tells us in her preface, "school nursing is still in its infancy, and many changes in methods are to be expected, but the underlying essentials—child love and preservation of child health—will exist as long as child life."

"It is," says Mrs. Struthers, "very generally believed that so-called medical inspection of schools, or, more properly speaking, health supervision of school children, is of recent origin; that it is, in fact, one of the progressive measures of this century—an outcome of the newly aroused social conscience. Nevertheless, medical inspection of schools dates back to the palmy days of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Under these ancient and warlike people, the State trained, educated, and developed the child for his place in life. With them, however, the child was first the child of the State, and secondly the child of his parents, and to the State his physical training was more important than his mental training, because the chief duty of the State was to prepare the man for war."

THE POLICY OF EXCLUSION.

Mrs. Struthers traces the successive steps in connection with the medical supervision of schools and school children of recent years. In the nineteenth century this only meant exclusion from school for communicable or loathsome diseases, and but little attention was paid to the child after exclusion. In most instances the parents failed, through ignorance, to obtain the necessary treatment, and he was even allowed to play on the street with other children after school hours, thereby making of no avail the first act of exclusion.

THE POLICY OF CURE.

"The advent of the school nurse brought a radical change in the methods of dealing with

diseased children. Instead of being excluded and neglected they were treated by the school nurse. Many cases were treated in the schools without danger of contagion to other children. The nurse visited the homes, pointed out to parents the dangers of such maladies, and specially interested the mother in getting the children well. The trained, and let us add the kindly and diplomatic, nurse became the guide, philosopher, and friend of the family. The school nurse who fails to get into intimate touch with the family must confess she has failed in her first mission. As a result of the nurse's work, school attendance increased fifty per cent. Interested and regular attendance took the place of exclusion and truancy."

THE POLICY OF PREVENTION.

"During the last ten years the important outcome of the school health work has been the emphasis placed upon a policy of prevention. It is just the old story that prevention is better than cure; that education is better than reformation. . . . At the present time, therefore, health education is the fundamental basis of all school health work. To cure disease or remove physical defect is a necessary but incidental part of the work. The factors of greatest importance to the child's future welfare are wholesome food, proper clothing, personal cleanliness, physical drill and play, and plenty of fresh air in school and home. Unfortunately many have been slow to recognize that this last policy should be the primary function of the school in health work."

Mrs. Struthers gives the history of the development of school nursing both in America and in this country. She details the organization of a system of health supervision of school children, and gives suggestive rules.

A very interesting section is the description of the little mothers' classes and school, and of baby clinics, organized for the purpose of teaching little girls with younger brothers and sisters how to take care of their charges. Admirable illustrations show these little mothers as interested audiences at demonstrations of bedmaking, of the baby's bath, and of putting baby to bed. Considerable space is devoted to the Forest School at Toronto, and the uselessness of trying to cram a child's head full of knowledge when the body is enfeebled, poorly nourished, or sick, is emphasised.

A study of Mrs. Struthers' lucid and interesting exposition of the purpose of school nursing should do much to create a sympathetic understanding of the needs of school children and of the high value in the body politic of the work of school nurses.

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