

COLLEGE OF NURSING, LTD.

BIRMINGHAM THREE COUNTIES CENTRE.

THE SCHOOL MEDICAL SERVICE IN RELATION TO PREVENTIVE MEDICINE.

On Tuesday, December 6th, in the Lecture Theatre of the General Hospital, Birmingham (by kind permission of the Governors), Dr. G. A. Auden, M.D., F.R.C.P. (School Medical Officer), gave an interesting lecture on "The School Medical Service in Relation to Preventive Medicine."

In 1907, as the result of repeated representations from Royal Commissions and Scientific Bodies, the Medical Inspection of School Children became a duty of every local Education Authority. The Medical Inspection of School Children may be viewed from two aspects.

The first, which may be called the selfish aspect, is based upon the fact that schools act as a clearing house for infectious diseases, and it is part of the Police duty of the State to prevent the spread of infectious diseases by the appointment of Medical Officers who will visit the schools for this purpose. The second and altruistic aspect lies in the recognition that it is the duty of the State to see that conditions of life are rendered increasingly favourable for successive generations, and that, as the children are aggregated together at school, this can be effected by the appointment of School Medical Officers.

Till about 1880 Public Health endeavour was largely directed to the improvement of the conditions of environment, but during the last thirty years the centre of gravity has shifted, and it is the individual rather than the environment who is now the peculiar care of the Medical Officer of Health, for example, the prevention of Infant Mortality, of Tuberculosis, Puerperal Fever, and the like.

Dr. Auden rapidly enumerated the main defects revealed by School Inspection:—

1. The large number of children incapable of benefiting by instruction as a result of physical deformities: These children as future citizens have a right to demand such educational provision as is suited for their limited capacities.
2. Children suffering from sense defects, whose disability may be alleviated by treatment or operation, eye defects, ear defects, &c.
3. Children suffering from a continuance of those post-natal conditions which tend to produce a high infant mortality rate, *i.e.*, Rickets, Diarrhoea, Pulmonary Infections.
4. Children suffering from infectious diseases.
5. Dull and backward children, of whom 10 per cent. are to be found in every school population.

In order to deal with these problems it is necessary to regard them not only as school problems, but from the wide standpoint of Public Health, for although much work for the individual has been done, so far no constructive policy for the prevention of those defects has been evolved, and the causation of conditions producing the untoward results has yet to be discovered.

The lecturer advocated the wider adoption of open-air conditions in the schools in the interests of the children; he pointed out that health is a unity, and that there is no dividing line between the health of the infant, the school child, the adolescent, and the adult. There should, therefore, be no division of responsibility and of effort, but a unity of control, both central and local, is necessary. Centrally, this unity of control has been partially secured by the Ministry of Health Act, whereby all the powers and duties in respect of Medical Inspection and treatment of children hitherto exercised by the Board of Education have been transferred to the Minister of Health.

Locally, however, much remains to be done. Education Committees are appointed primarily to administer education, and any question of health must necessarily assume a secondary importance, especially now that education proper is such a heavy financial burden; on the other hand, the function of a Health Committee is the promotion of health measures. In the interests of economy and efficiency, therefore, the time is ripe for the consideration of the transfer of all its medical activities from the Education Committee to the Health Committee of all local authorities.

G. M. E. JONES,
Hon. Press Secretary.

THE HOSPITAL WORLD.

The Lady Mayoress of London—the first Lady Mayoress in the world, we should imagine, to be a certificated Nurse—is holding a Sale of Work and Fancy Fair on behalf of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, at the Mansion House this week, on the 14th and 15th December, from 12 o'clock to 8 p.m. each day. Lady Baddeley is very devoted to her old Training School, and we hope her efforts upon its behalf will be generously supported.

Considerable bequests to hospitals by the late Mr. James Parkinson, Old Colwyn, have been cancelled by a new will just proved, in which he says: "By a previous will I had intended leaving three-fourths of my estate to hospitals, but as it would benefit the majority of the loafers formerly called workers I leave the money in trust for the benefit of the Royal National Pension Fund for Nurses, of 15, Buckingham Street, Strand, as nurses, unlike three-fifths of the loafing wastrels generally, have never wantonly and even maliciously gone on strike without the slightest provocation, sense, or justification."

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