

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 1,802.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1922.

Vol. LXIX

EDITORIAL.

"WELL, AND TRULY LAID"

Everyone knows that if a building is to be beautiful and enduring, its foundations must be "well and truly laid"; and as with buildings, so with human beings. A supremely important time in the life of an individual is his or her school life, those early years when mind and body are growing quickly; if the health is to be conserved in after life, both must be carefully tended during childhood and adolescence. We may go further back, indeed, to the medical supervision of the pre-school child, the care of the infant, the care of the mother when carrying her unborn child, the mating of healthy parents; but at the present moment we desire to emphasise the improvement which has of recent years taken place in the health of school children owing to the attention it now receives from medical practitioners and trained nurses during school life.

In his annual report for 1921, entitled "The Health of the School Child," Sir George Newman, Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, makes the following statement:—

"The school medical service has unveiled the physical condition of the children of the nation. It has shown the kind of physical impairment from which they suffer, its degree, its scope, and its disability. It has thrown light on the causes of such impairment and the means by which they may be avoided or removed. In a word, it has defined the problem and proved the facts. Many potent causes of social and physical inefficiency have been made manifest. Of course, the majority of the nation's children are, happily, sound in limb and lung. We should be in a parlous state if it were not so. It is the age period of life when the death-rate is lowest. But it is my duty to say that the experience of fifteen years of the school medical service has proved beyond all question that the physical and mental impairment of children of school age is wide in

distribution and serious in its effect on the national education, health, and capacity. Dental caries, defective vision, and mental retardation—excluding all other forms of defect—are each a problem of considerable magnitude.

"Secondly, the school medical service has provided remedy or cure for hundreds of thousands of children.

"In this way, in sum total, a vast mass of disease has been stopped, and is being stopped every year. Indirectly, also, the practice of school hygiene has provided most effective prevention of the causes of disease in the improved lighting, ventilation, seating, and sanitation of schools. The provision of school meals and of physical training are also important factors in this direction. If half a million children are treated every year (who, before, were largely neglected), and their various defects and diseases thus far remedied, it is obvious that a vast mass of subsequent disablement, sickness, and mortality is prevented.

"Two other obvious changes have occurred. The school itself, in all its grades, and the home have been affected by the school medical service. The class-room, its lighting, ventilation and equipment, the very methods of education practised in it, have undergone considerable changes. The posture of the children, the cleanliness of their heads and bodies, their clothing, the letterpress of the books they read, are all in steady process of improvement, in part because of a more enlightened understanding of the meaning of health. Nor are the parents and homes of the children unaffected. On all sides the evidence is clear and indisputable that there is an increased and more intelligent sense of parental responsibility in regard to the importance of the health of children."

While much still remains to be done, we agree with Sir George Newman's conclusion that the "record of advance in the physical care of the school child since 1908 is one which is full of achievement and full of encouragement."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)