

THE HEALTH OF OUR CHILDREN.¹

ONE feels on reading the report referred to below that the nation possesses in Sir George Newman a general with a plan, who, having consolidated the gains of ten years' work, is pressing on to his objective: the prevention of disabling diseases and the winning for every child of his birthright of a happy and healthy childhood. Such is the impression gained by a careful study of this most interesting and comprehensive report.

In section iii. will be found the results of a typical medical inspection conducted by a most competent observer—Dr. C. J. Thomas, of the London County Council. Two sets of three hundred unselected elder children each, in typical London and country schools, were inspected, and the results are described and analysed. One reads with dismay that "after deduction of the blind, deaf, mentally and physically defective, and invalid children drafted to special schools or absent from school, there were of the children present at school 21 per cent. found to be suffering from one or more serious defects . . . 12 per cent. were ill-nourished; 19 per cent. were unclean in body; of the London children 40 per cent., and of the country children 65 per cent., had some carious teeth; 11 per cent. suffered from disease of nose or throat; 10 per cent. had 'very serious' defects of vision; 6 per cent. suffered from defective hearing and 6 per cent. from severe anæmia; and of middle ear disease, of organic heart disease, of skin disease, and of spinal curvature of 'worst grade' there were in each case 4 per cent. of sufferers."

We agree with Sir George Newman's comment on these grim facts:—"No one, I think, can consider these findings or read Dr. Thomas's account of the physical condition of these children about to leave school for industrial occupations without understanding, once and for all, the gravity of the situation."

It is with a sense of relief one finds that a good deal is being done by several education authorities to remedy the defects found. There are still, however, a good many C3 authorities. Most hopeful of all, however, is the policy "broad and deep" which the Board of Education's Chief Medical Officer, since translated to the Local Government Board, has all along had in mind—the safeguarding of each and every child's health from babyhood up to and including school-life. This policy we find explained in his excellent exposition of those sections of the new Education Act which deal with the health of children and young persons.

"The Act," writes Sir George, "lays emphasis upon the broad fact that the purposes of the School Medical Service are not the detection of defects, the discovery of child-patients, and the treatment of such sick children, but the advancement of the health and physical development of the whole child population of school age."

The author of this report does not rest content with a recital of first principles. He points the way to their realisation. Thus we find much practical advice on the teaching of hygiene and mothercraft, on the control of juvenile employment, on open-air schools, on physical education, on play-centres, and on holiday camps. We note with pleasure his reference to the cheery brotherhood of Boy Scouts.

Everyone interested in education, and therefore in our children, should study this inspiring report. Certainly the personnel of the School Medical Service must realise that they have had as chief, not only an eminent expert, but also a man of large vision, a leader who really leads.

W. E. H.

¹ Annual Report for 1917 of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education. (Cd. 9206.) (H.M. Stationery Office.) Price 1s. net.

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BIOLOGY.

Ginn and Co. (Boston, Mass., and London).—An Elementary Biology, Gruenberg; Manual to Elementary Biology, Gruenberg. *Oxford University Press.*—Mammalian Physiology: A Course of Practical Exercises, Prof. C. S. Sherrington. *John Wiley and Sons, Inc. (New York), and Chapman and Hall, Ltd.*—Economic Woods of the United States, Prof. S. J. Record; Forest Management, A. B. Recknagel and J. Bently, jun.; Bacteriology and Mycology of Foods, Dr. F. W. Tanner, illustrated.

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