

such other conditions as tend to a condition of general ill health, in so far as they induce sore throat, favour the reception of any imported diphtheria infection. (5.) There are ample grounds for believing that the aggregation of children in elementary schools constitutes one of the conditions under which a form of disease of particular potency for spread and for death may be manufactured. (6.) The practices of kissing and of transferring sweetmeats from mouth to mouth, the joint use of drinking-cups, and the like, must assist in the diffusion of diphtheria among schoolfellows.

Tuberculosis.

As in some other forms of infectious disease, tuberculosis has not long been made a notifiable disease, consequently statistics will not be of much value. Forty-nine cases have been notified in the district, sixteen being from Wellington and suburbs.

In the Registrar-General's return for the Wellington and Taranaki Provinces for the year ending 31st December, 1901, no less than 174 deaths were returned as having occurred from some form of tubercular disease, the proportion of deaths from tubercular to other diseases being as 1 to 9, and of phthisis to other diseases being as 1 to 14. This compares very favourably with the statistics of other countries, yet, in the light of present knowledge, a good deal may surely be accomplished towards lessening the mortality from this scourge.

With regard to the control of tuberculosis in the Wellington District little has been done. Until the State has decided to take charge of those unfortunates who may desire it, the writer is of the opinion that where the medical man in attendance on a case expresses himself as satisfied that all the proper precautions, such as the disinfection of the sputa, &c., are being performed, further action on the part of the Health Officer is unadvisable—or, at any rate, premature. There is rather too much tendency on the part of the public to treat persons suffering from this disease as a species of pariah. Popular hysteria should not allow injustice to be done to many a useful member of the community, who, though a victim to the disease, may yet earn his livelihood honourably to the benefit of his family and the State.

SCHOOL INSPECTION.

The necessity for a form of systematic school inspection, as carried out in Germany and the United States, is undoubtedly necessary in the schools of this colony, and the experience gained by the present prevalence of infectious diseases in the Wellington District has emphasized this fact. Apart from the usual inspection into the general sanitation of a school, the scholars should be periodically subjected to careful medical examination. As previously mentioned in this report, on more than one occasion have children suffering from a mild form of infectious disease been found attending school. Under section 87 of the Education Act a teacher has the power to prevent a child from attending school from premises that he suspects to be infected. The majority of teachers take an intelligent advantage of this section, but it is to be regretted that a small minority do not see the extreme importance not only to themselves, but to the children and the State at large, of exercising all possible precautions to prevent the spread of infectious disease by school-attendance. It may be argued that the teacher is not a medical man, and so forth, but a few intelligent questions put to a child by the schoolmaster may be productive of much good. It was only recently that a schoolmaster informed the writer that he thought it an excellent thing to allow children to attend school from houses infected with scarlet fever, "so that they may get the disease and have done with it." This gentleman was entirely unacquainted with the fact that the longer a child lives free from exposure to the disease the less likely is he or she to contract it when brought into contact with the infection of scarlet fever. Happily it is not often that such ignorance is found on the part of one to whom is intrusted the education of the young. The schoolmaster, however, has a distinct grievance in the fact that the exclusion of scholars or the closure of the school is likely to be attended with pecuniary loss to himself. This is not only unfair to the teacher, but also to the parent; for although no attempt on the part of a teacher to mask infectious disease has ever come to the knowledge of the writer, yet it must be confessed that at times there must be a strong temptation to do so.

Closure of Schools.

Although a good deal of infectious disease has been prevalent in the district, except in two instances there has been no necessity to fall back upon that last resource of the Health Officer—school-closure. In one instance where this course was necessary it was due to the apathy or ignorance of the School Committee; in the other it was rendered necessary by the outbreak of scarlet fever in the schoolmaster's residence, where no proper isolation of the patients could be observed. Closure of schools in country districts is more efficacious in controlling the spread of infectious disease than closure of town schools, for in the latter the children are apt to meet on common playing-grounds. Again, schoolmasters' in a district should be immediately warned of the closure of any school, as some parents are in the habit, when the school is closed, of sending their children to the nearest school available.

Sanitation of Schools.

During visits of inspection to various localities it has been a custom of the writer, when possible, to look into the sanitation of the schools in the neighbourhood. It is not unusual to find the privies inadequate in number, ill-ventilated, and situated over foul excreta-pits. In all cases where these latter abominations have been found, on recommendation to the local Committee they have been promptly abolished. In some instances the water-supply has proved questionable on analysis. In any case it would be as well to supply a Pasteur-Chamberlain filter to each school, and also to do away with the iron drinking-cup that is generally attached to the well or tank. These cups are a fruitful source of transmitting diphtheria. Of course, it is not practicable for each child to bring his own cup, but the thick glass drinking-cups that are used in the schools in the United States might be generally introduced.