

- (b.) The study of factors influencing the life and health of the school-child, and the suggestion of preventive or remedial measures for those which are harmful. This includes general hygiene, as the supervision of school buildings and the provision of healthy surroundings for the school-child. It should also include the devising of means to bring medical or dental aid and special educational methods within the reach of the individual child.

Though the School Nurses have been working only a few months their success is already assured. They are of much assistance to the Medical Officers during the examination of the schools, and they "follow up" cases notified, visiting the parents in their own homes and giving advice and assistance to the mothers. Already the School Nurses have detected cases of contagious disease, and thus probably been the means of preventing an epidemic. The School Nurses help to link up medical inspection with the valuable work already performed by existing societies, especially the Plunket Society and Kindergarten Associations. The results of the work of the School Nurses have been so excellent that we hope to see their numbers increased.

EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL-CHILDREN.

Personal Cleanliness.—In the routine examination note is first taken of the personal cleanliness and clothing. In the majority of cases cleanliness is good or satisfactory, though attention to details, such as the cleaning of teeth, hands, and finger-nails, is often insufficient. Verminous conditions of the body are rare, but of the head much more frequent—at least about 4 per cent. In some schools this evil is non-existent—in others it is a plague. Many teachers deserve great credit for their efforts to eradicate this condition by constant supervision and instruction. The School Nurse gives great assistance by going into the homes instructing the mothers as to care of the children's hair, and a leaflet has lately been issued giving details for treatment. The difficulty is that the worst cases often come from homes where the condition is general and regarded as trivial.

Clothing is, as a rule, clean and sufficient, though almost every school has a few dirty, ragged, and destitute children. Many other children are much overclothed, small children being often imprisoned in so many layers of clothing that free movement is impossible. It is not uncommon to find from six to nine layers of tight garments ensheathing the body and constricting the chest. During full inspiration unbuttoned bodices or waistcoats sometimes gape as much as 4 in. The modern fashion of sending children out in bleak weather with knees bare and legs scantily covered is to be deplored. Small girls have frequently over their chests six garments which end at the waist in a mere frill. Mothers do not realize that children become ill from scanty covering of the legs as readily as from exposure of the chest to cold. The essentials of clothing are (1) that it should give sufficient warmth, and (2) that it should not restrict free movement. The usual school dress—especially for girls—lacks simplicity and limits movement. (See "Clothing" in circular "Suggestions to Parents" at end.)

NUTRITION, NORMAL AND SUBNORMAL.

Nutrition is found to be satisfactory or good in the majority of children. It is unsatisfactory or bad in about 10 per cent. A comparison of heights and weights of British and New Zealand children of same age is markedly in favour of the colonials, who are both taller and heavier. Good nurture promotes good growth, and a wealthy vigorous colony naturally produces children of improved physique. Nevertheless, the average of nutrition should be higher. The worst cases of malnutrition come either from remote districts in the country or from the slum area in towns, and the best type of child is to be found in a good farming district. It is a popular fiction that the country child has necessarily superior advantages. Among the struggling population of the backblocks houses are often overcrowded and insanitary, food is monotonous in character and badly cooked, mothers and children both being overworked. Many country children are accustomed to the use of condensed instead of fresh milk. They may travel a long distance to school after a scanty breakfast, existing throughout the day on a scanty lunch brought with them and often eaten before school begins, and going home in the evening to the one substantial meal of the day.

The Woodville District High School staff have lately, at the suggestion of a Medical Inspector, adopted an organized plan of supervising lunch and providing hot cocoa at minimum cost for all children remaining at school at midday. Figures showing increase of height and weight for each scholar over a known period give striking proof of the improvement in nutrition brought about by this simple means. This improvement is doubtless due not only to the fact that the children receive actually more nourishing food, but also to the fact that they sit at rest while eating instead of rushing about and snatching their food at convenient intervals from play. Children who go home for a substantial lunch often lose much of its benefit because of the haste with which it is eaten and the hurried journey to and from school. Rest is always desirable after a meal, as has been amply demonstrated in open-air recovery schools.

In dairying districts children are often employed at late and early milking, and overwork is responsible for both physical and mental inferiority. For example, O. M., boy, aged 12, Standard IV, lives on milk-farm; gets up at 3 a.m., milks five cows, and takes milk round neighbouring townships before school at 9 a.m. In the evening he milks cows and goes to bed at 8 p.m. The schoolmaster said that the boy appeared mentally dull and occasionally fell asleep in school, obviously from overfatigue. This cannot be wondered at. Many other examples might be quoted.

Undesirable city conditions are a generally recognized factor in causing malnutrition. Poverty, overcrowding, inefficiency, and vice in particular produce it. Inquiries as to diet from school-children indicate that it is often the character and mode of preparation of food that is