

WELLINGTON RECEIVING HOME.

SIR,—

Wellington, 21st February, 1912.

I have the honour to inform you that during the past year I have attended the children of the Wellington Receiving Home when ill, and also visited the Home at intervals. There has been very little illness among the children during the year, which I attribute to the care exercised in the selection of foster-parents and the absence of the usual spell of hot weather this summer.

I have, &c.,

DONALD MCGAVIN, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.S.,
Medical Officer.

The Secretary for Education, Wellington.

BOYS' INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, STOKE.

SIR,—

Nelson, 26th January, 1912.

During the year I have paid twelve monthly visits of inspection, and in addition have had cause to visit the institution at odd times on account of sickness of some of the boys. Taken as a whole, the health of the inmates has been excellent, and I am glad to say there has been no epidemic of any sort. Two boys have been sent to the Nelson Hospital for operation for hernia, and have returned to Stoke with satisfactory results. One boy was sent to the hospital with rheumatic fever, and he also returned cured. One boy is still in the hospital with tubercular disease of the knee, and his prospects of permanent cure are not good. Two other boys were sent with intractable skin-diseases, and have returned much improved. During the year about twenty boys have been reported to me as "wetting their beds" at night. Under treatment this number has been considerably reduced. I should advise that any persistent cases be circumcised. In an institution that contains a large number of boys like this I would suggest that every boy under the age of thirteen years be circumcised. The operation in itself is not dangerous (beyond the usual danger of an anæsthetic), and the result is beneficial in the highest degree. It reduces the tendency to self-abuse in a remarkable way, and is, in my opinion, an essential to clean living.

A certain number of the boys suffer from adenoids. I propose to operate on the worst cases next month, with the permission of the authorities. The effects of these growths is to retard the development of the boy, both mentally and physically, and it is essential that the growths be removed when it is manifest the boy is not doing as well as might be the case after an operation.

The average number of boys is about 129. Age, from twelve years to seventeen years.

I inspect the punishment-book every month, and am satisfied that the punishment inflicted is not too much. A strap is used for the purpose, and chastisement is always administered by the Manager in the presence of a witness.

Each boy has a hot bath once a week. During the summer months bathing is indulged in once or twice a day, under the supervision of one of the masters.

The food is excellent. I have from time to time inspected the kitchens, and have taken advantage of finding the boys at meals to inspect the food, and am satisfied that it is of good quality and of sufficient quantity. There is an excellent supply of vegetables, and meat and pudding are served, with two kinds of vegetables, every midday. Porridge and milk, with bread, butter, or treacle, forms the chief article of diet at breakfast; and the working-boys receive meat and vegetables at tea-time, in addition to the ordinary bread, butter, and jam.

The milkers rise at 5 a.m., the others at 6 a.m. Workers work from 8 a.m. to noon, and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. School hours (for boys under fourteen), 9 a.m. to 12, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Bed-time is 7.30 p.m., and lights are out at 8 p.m.

The cooking department is excellent in every way.

There are two dormitories, the front room being 75 ft. by 36 ft. by 15 ft., and contains sixty-four beds. There are twelve large windows, giving plenty of ventilation. The other dormitory is rather larger, and contains sixty-five beds. The dormitories are kept beautifully clean and fresh, but the beds are too close together. The remedy for this is to either reduce the number of boys or build another dormitory. I do not approve of beds less than 4 ft. apart.

There is a night lavatory, flushed by water, and close to the dormitories. This is altogether insufficient, and it is not reasonable to expect a small boy to visit this in the dark. I would suggest that a portable urinal be placed in each dormitory at night and removed in the morning. There are two day lavatories on the trench system, and well flushed by water. The lavatories are excellent in themselves, but at least two more are urgently needed. The evil effects of having to wait too long for relief are easily seen, and I would strongly urge the immediate erection of two more lavatories on the same system as the present ones. There is one day urinal and one night urinal: these could well be augmented by the building of two or three extra ones. I have never yet had any fault to find with the sanitary arrangements as regards offensive smells, but I must urge the immediate attention to the lack of accommodation in this respect.

The dairy is insufficient and out of date. One wall is not match-lined, and the floor is of wood. I would urge the erection of a new dairy as soon as possible.

In conclusion, I would wish to thank the manager and staff for the courtesy they have always extended during my visits, and to compliment them on the splendidly efficient manner in which they have conducted the institution. Taken as a whole, the management of the boys (from a health point of view) has been excellent.

There is one point I would like to bring up—the want of accommodation in case of an epidemic such as scarlet fever. The Nelson Hospital could not accommodate more than five or six patients, and might very easily be overtaxed already. There is no part of the building reserved as a hospital, and in the event of serious illness the patient has to be taken to the town. In the event of an epidemic