

STAFF.

At the end of the year the staff of this division consisted of thirteen school medical officers and twenty-seven school nurses, distributed throughout the Dominion as follows :—

						Medical Officers.	Nurses.
North Auckland	..	..	..	..	..	1	2
Auckland Central	..	..	..	..	..	2	4
South Auckland	..	..	..	..	..	1	2
Wanganui and Taranaki	..	..	..	..	..	1	2
Hawke's Bay	..	..	..	..	..	1	2
Wellington	..	..	..	..	..	1	3
Nelson and Marlborough	..	..	..	..	..	1	2
Canterbury	..	..	..	..	..	2	6
Otago	..	..	..	..	..	2	3
Southland	..	..	..	..	..	1	1
						<hr/> 13	<hr/> 27

In a general way the work of these officers may be described under two headings—(1) inspectional, and (2) educational.

SECTION 2.—NATURE OF MEDICAL INSPECTION.

MEDICAL INSPECTION.

School medical officers are empowered by the Health Act, 1920, to inspect any or all of the children attending the State primary schools of the Dominion.

The school medical officer assisted by the school nurse medically examines the children at a school. The results of the examination are recorded upon a separate record-card for each child. On this record-card is also entered information relating to the child's former and present health, obtained from the parents in reply to an inquiry-card issued in advance. The parents of those children found to be in need of medical or dental treatment or advice are notified, and recommended to have the matter attended to; and the names, addresses, &c., of these children are entered by the school nurse in a register. At a later date the "notified" children are reinspected at the school by the nurse, and notes as to whether treatment has been obtained are entered in the register. The parents of those children who have not received treatment are then called on by the nurse, who persuades, advises, or assists the parents in whatever way circumstances may indicate. The dates, numbers, and results of such reinspections and visits to homes are entered in the register. From this and other forms the proportion of the notifications which are responded to by treatment is worked out. The data entered upon the record-cards are also tabulated on summary forms for statistical purposes.

As the effectiveness of the inspection depends almost entirely upon the sympathy and co-operation of parents, it is of very great value for the school medical officer to get into personal touch with the parents; and this can be best done either by meeting them individually or collectively in connection with the medical examination of their children. Some officers invite the parents to be present during the inspection, and discuss with individual parents matters relating to the health of their children. This method has been found to result in a distinctly increased response from the parents, and to a great extent lessens the amount of home visiting by the nurses. It, however, involves additional time and energy on the part of the school medical officer, and it has not been found practicable in all districts. Other officers invite parents to meet them collectively at the school; a short address is given on salient matters, discussion invited, and questions answered. In arranging such meetings it has been found valuable, especially in country districts, to enlist the co-operation of the local School Committees. By the help of the head teacher and the Committee in rural communities the amount of interest taken in the work is often most gratifying. One officer says: "Wherever possible I have met the parents and the School Committee at an evening meeting, and have been agreeably surprised at the numbers who will walk or ride for miles in the rain and through mud to listen." The subject of lecturing will be further referred to under the heading of "Educational propaganda."

Work of School Nurses.—This is described by one medical officer as follows: "In addition to assisting the medical officer in the medical examination of the school-children, the school nurse is an important factor in the social work of her district, and is a most valuable asset in propaganda. In the city districts the school nurses pay several thousands of visits to homes in the year and give much useful advice. They keep under constant supervision the dirty, ill-nourished, and neglected child. They superintend the arrangements for necessary hospital and dental treatment, and personally escort many children to and from the hospital or convalescent home."

Another officer states: "School nurses get to know by sight almost every child in their schools, and to know a good deal of each one's home circumstances and relationships." Generally speaking, the school nurse performs much laborious and very valuable work; she is a very essential part of the service.

Such is, in very brief and without any pretence of completeness, an outline of the inspectional side of the work. There is no cast-iron scheme, and each medical officer develops or varies the method according to what is best felt to meet the conditions presenting in each district.