

Tuberculosis.—Our experience goes to confirm that of other countries in that children suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis are not often found in the schools. The illness caused by this disease is usually too severe and its action too rapid in the young to permit of attendance. This does not apply to more chronic tubercular affections, as of bone or glands, where, in spite of depressed vitality and limited activity, the sufferer may not be completely incapacitated. The percentage found thus suffering is, however, very low.

Goitre.—The amount of goitre recorded is much greater this year, but it is to be assumed that the extra amount of attention devoted to noting and obtaining treatment for this defect is responsible for the increased percentage shown.

Pediculosis and Skin-disease.—Though the general standard of cleanliness is very good throughout the Dominion, there was, especially during the winter months, an increase in the number of children suffering from verminous conditions and skin-diseases. The reason for this is not altogether apparent. Bad housing, with overcrowding, lack of sanitary conveniences, together with the diminished time spent out of doors owing to inclement weather, doubtless contributed. Maori children suffer to a greater extent than do white from both pediculosis and scabies. In some Native schools, scabies, or its equivalent hakehake, persists throughout the winter, but disappears for the summer months when bathing in sea or river becomes popular. School nurses do valuable work in detecting pediculosis and skin affections in the class-room, and in giving instructions as to the necessary treatment. Many teachers render assistance by holding a daily inspection for cleanliness of hands, nails, teeth, &c. This simple procedure assists greatly in preserving a good standard. An example of wrong educational values is quoted by one school medical officer. A child excluded suffering from vermin in the head during the year was, at the end of it, declared to be dux of the school.

(4.) NUTRITION AND POSTURE, ETC.

In taking a general view of the situation we find that New Zealand children are both taller and heavier than British children of the same age, and there is no doubt that their average general health and physique compare satisfactorily with those found in other countries. Nevertheless, we find that subnormal nutrition occurs in 6.39 per cent. and deformity of trunk and chest in 21.96 per cent. of the children examined. These conditions are interrelated, and for the most part preventable, coming as they do from a lack of observation of the simple rules of hygiene. There is undoubtedly a section of the people who cannot provide for their children suitable home conditions, and food adequate in quantity and quality. Bad housing in the cities entails sleep in overcrowded ill-ventilated rooms and lack of playground space and facilities for growing fresh garden-produce. However, the high price of land in the cities, and difficulty of transit into the suburbs, may justify to some degree flat or tenement life, the family living beyond the business area, in possession of its own cottage and garden-space, will always offer better opportunities to its children. The fundamental necessities of healthy growth are simple, and it is doubtful if there is any country in the world to-day where they are more universally procurable. Fresh air, sunlight, food of the right type and amount, adequate sleep and rest, wholesome exercise, are available for all but that small section of the people already mentioned. Sir Frederick Mott, in an address recently published in the *British Medical Journal*, quotes Voltaire: "Regime in diet is better than medicine. Eat moderately what you know by experience you can digest, for that which you can digest only is good for the body. What is the medicine that makes you digest? Exercise. What will repair your energy? Sleep. What will lessen incurable ills? Patience. What can change a bad constitution? Nothing." To this text he adds the benefits of sunlight and pure air.

Reports from school medical officers continue to record that tea, white bread, and meat play the chief part in the dietary of many homes. Fresh fruit and vegetables, even in rural areas, are not eaten sufficiently.

Frequent eating between meals takes away appetite and retards digestion. Many children bring to school substantial "play lunches" to be consumed at the mid-morning interval. Others consume large quantities of sweets. Healthy hunger they rarely know. A noteworthy fact is that in New Zealand the consumption of sugar per head per annum is 117 lb., as against rather more than half that quantity in Britain and much less in other countries. Apart from its directly deleterious influence on the teeth, the alteration of food values in the dietary necessitated by the inclusion of so much sugar results in digestive troubles and disturbed nutrition. In this country, with its many sources of supply, eggs, milk, cheese, butter, fresh fruit, and vegetables should be available in sufficient abundance and at low-enough prices to displace to a greater extent the meat that is such a prominent article of diet in many households.

The value of rest, both physical and mental, for children is not adequately recognized. In the country many children work early and late at farm-work, as milking, &c., and in the city children earn money as newsboys, message-boys, &c. Where the family exchequer needs to be augmented in this way excuse must be made, but in many comfortable homes children do not rest sufficiently. Mr. Cyril Burt, psychologist for the London City Council, was recently reported as deploring the tendency in modern education to attach undue value to the dramatic and theatrical. Children who possess talent are made to drag it prematurely into the light of publicity. They are overtrained and overstimulated. Nearly all children are taught to regard frequent amusement as essential to happiness. To leave them to develop their own resources and allow them to find interest in simple and natural things would be to extend widely their chance of future happiness.

It is the wrongly fed, insufficiently rested child that most readily develops physical deformity. The fatigued nervous system is expressed in general bodily slackness. There is deficient muscular and ligamentous tone. The typical faulty posture is thus acquired, with drooping head, flat chest, wing shoulders, prominent abdomen. Vitality is depressed and the bodily mechanism out of gear.