

Feeble-minded.—The two residential schools (Richmond and Otekaieke) provide for only a small proportion of the children that would be registered in a complete census of the feeble-minded. As our population is scattered, residential schools are a necessary provision, and they offer an advantage also in the training given to children in the habits and observances of ordinary society. Much effort is often expended in teaching a feeble-minded child to do badly what a normal child does easily and well. An ambitious school curriculum entails waste of energy, and is unproductive of any result to justify it. These children can never compete in the world. They will always require, to avoid disaster, the supervision of relatives or of some institution. To keep them happy and make them, if possible, self-supporting is the best that can be expected. Rhythmic exercises and much sense-training are necessary in order that they may acquire motor-control and precision.

Juvenile delinquency in its relationship to mental defect has not, so far, received consistent consideration in New Zealand. There is no regular provision, as in Britain and America, for the psychological study of youthful law-breakers. Following on the lines of these older countries, we must before long supply this want, and arrange for cases which come before our Juvenile Courts to receive individual consideration from the psychologist before being pronounced upon by the Magistrate.

Epileptic Children.—There is, so far, in New Zealand no adequate provision for the education of epileptic children. Where fits are nocturnal in incidence or slight in character there is no difficulty about the epileptic child attending the ordinary school. When, as often happens, severe attacks of epilepsy occur in schools, so that they are a source of terror to the children and of anxiety to the teacher, there is no satisfactory arrangement to meet the case. The epileptic must continue at school in spite of any bad effect on other children, or he must discontinue and his education cease. Either course is obviously undesirable, and provision must be made (by a residential school or special day classes) so that epileptic children may receive suitable instruction.

SECTION 3.—TEACHING OF SEX HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS.

Considerable discussion has recently taken place upon the advisability of teaching sex hygiene in the schools. It is an established fact that many young people meet difficulty and perhaps disaster owing to an inadequate knowledge of the meaning of sex and its functions. Guidance which should primarily be given by parents is neglected, and children are left to find their own sources of information—often undesirable ones. The crises and problems incidental to school life may make it the duty of the teacher to give advice or instruction to the individual child on this matter, though the co-operation of parents should be, unless in extraordinary circumstances, first obtained. The teacher should therefore be equipped with a knowledge of how to deal with the subject. Nevertheless, the personality of the teacher and his or her own mental attitude must always be a much more important factor than any theoretical knowledge. There must be sympathetic relationship between teacher and pupil, and confidence and respect on the part of the child towards his instructor.

As a knowledge of facts is not a sufficient protection or guarantee of a right course of action, it has to be stressed that the atmosphere and environment in which the child grows up, and the attitude which he acquires towards any problem or difficulty, is of fundamental importance. Wholesomely acquired knowledge is certainly necessary for the adolescent, but by itself is inadequate. The attitude of the youth towards all moral problems, his own natural inclinations, the character of his ambitions and ideals, and his capability for self-discipline are important factors. An environment which promotes healthy interests and activities is essential for right growth.

Class teaching of this subject in our elementary schools appears to be undesirable. The effect of class instruction upon individual children cannot be calculated, and it must be destructive to the reticence with which it is desirable that children should discuss the subject. Instruction to be efficacious must proceed from good sources. Parents may be advised either by a pamphlet offering suggestions or by lectures from well-qualified people as to the best method of giving the necessary information to their children. A desirable step in any campaign for providing better knowledge of sex hygiene among the youth would be the education of training-college students, not primarily with a view to their giving general instruction, but in order that they may be better equipped to deal with the emergencies and individual problems of school life.

SECTION 4.—OPEN-AIR CLASSES AND SCHOOLS.

The custom of holding classes out-of-doors where possible is fortunately extending, but can be with benefit much more widely adopted. Playground shelters and trees are frequently utilized for this purpose.

Much argument has ranged around the question of open-air schools. No one can deny the benefit of fresh air; and, though climatic conditions in some districts may make provision for shelter from wind necessary, there is no doubt that every class-room should be potentially an open-air room. Any one who has seen the extent to which, in climates much less favourable than ours, fresh air and sunlight are utilized to promote health in school-children cannot but hope for the time when all school-rooms are capable of affording free access to the world outside. Many of the more recently erected schools make excellent provision for this. Dr. Philipps, of Canterbury, has been successful in arousing a large amount of public interest in the establishment of open-air schools.

SECTION 5.—SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND SANITATION.

As remarked above, more recently erected schools give improved facilities for fresh air. In many of the older buildings, however, ventilation and lighting leave much to be desired. In some districts the old type of school furniture, with long desks and backless benches, still persists. Many class-rooms