## Accidents in the Home

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Director of the Division of School Hygiene, Health Department)

A LONG while ago I wrote in this journal, "The need is for thought and constant care in the preschool years so that toddlers will be safe in the home." I thought that to draw attention to the waste of little lives, to the horrible crippling and disfiurement that followed the all-too-frequent accidents in the home, would be enough to make New Zealand parents careful. If our birthrate was high, the loss of five or six dozen little ones each year by careless or foolish parents might not be important! And had we a teeming population the crippling of hundreds who miss dying but get damaged each year might not be noticed in our economy.

Nor can we, at the present moment, afford the waste of time of the doctors called to homes when accidents occur, nor the expenditure of expert skill in operating-theatres to make new faces and graft skin on marred features or limbs. And why should we occupy precious hospital beds with preventable home accidents, and tire our overworked nurses' feet further by keeping them running after very sick children who would have been playing had they not been cursed—you couldn't say blessed—with careless parents.

For the senseless waste is going on steadily; parents never seem to learn! You would think that a little fellow who grabbed the glowing electric radiator with both hands, and has been marvellously patched up with skin-grafting opera-tions (although he will never have full use of his hands again), would be guarded from similar accidents. But no! He was in trouble with the electric stove a few months later. When fathers and mothers read of neighbours' children pulling the flex of the electric jug and getting scalded, or grabbing electric irons or radiators, you would think that they would take care to avoid such accidents by having flexes and irons out of reach, and radiators guarded in their own homes. But do they? Our hospitals answer, No! Stop as you read you a little one in the house? Is your

electric radiator guarded?

Is your open fire guarded? Nightgowns of toddlers and open fires; a puff of draught, a bending for a toy—that's all, but it gives one of the most distressing burns. The nightgown "woofs" up, and in the quick flare the whole body gets burned; as the flame gathers force it does its worst round neck and face. If this ever happens in your house, keep your head, don't leave the child standing up, but quickly lay him flat, wrapping the little body in rug or overcoat or anything to stifle the flames. The flames being out, wrap the burnt area in a clean sheet or towel and rush off to the hospital. Don't try to take off the clothes. A burn is sterile at first, and the hospital will keep it sterile if you get there quickly enough, and don't put oily messy dressings in the way.

Listen, parents! Guard your radiators and your open fires. Hang your flexes out of reach. Razor blades, matches, poisons, aspirins, teapots, knives, scissors, pots on stoves—these and all dangerous things should be out of reach of toddlers. Toddlers learn by touching, by trying, by sampling, and you must let them do it safely. Let there be no preventable accident in your home.



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