

A New Government Enterprise in Public Health.

Numbers of our readers must be, by this time, interested in the department begun some weeks ago in our pages, "The New Public Health," but no doubt many are querying somewhat after this wise:—"The 'new' public health—what does that mean?" "Who is this Dr. H. W. Hill?" "What guarantee have we that his words carry weight?"—and so on, and so on, in the manner of this somewhat suspicious and laudably prying age.

It was with the object of answering such queries as these and removing all haziness in regard to the matter, that we recently paid a visit to the Institution whence, each fortnight, those pages of copy labelled "The New Public Health" proceed. "Seeing means believing," if eyes are to be trusted, and so our readers must be made to see through our eyes, hear with our ears, so far as practicable.

To come to the point at once, then, the Institute of Public Health, over which Dr. H. W. Hill presides, occupies a large building on Ottawa avenue, in the city of London, Ont., right next door to the vast pile that makes up Victoria Hospital. From its windows on the one side you catch a glimpse of the south branch of the River Thames meandering on its way to the confluence of the waters a little to the northward; from those on the other side you get a view of the city, and look down tree-lined avenues up which come trooping, at regular intervals, the students from the Medical College, for the Institute of Public Health, though established but recently (in July, 1912, to be precise), has already taken its place as a force to be reckoned upon in Western Ontario, and if it has its way, the young doctors turned out from the Western Ontario Medical School will be preventers as well as curers of disease. Lectures are also given to the nurses from the adjoining hospital, and to the girls from Alma College, St. Thomas, who will come up at regular intervals to receive instruction in hygiene, household sanitation, food values, and kindred topics.

Entering at the front door you find yourself in a spacious, airy place, filled with sunlight and smelling as yet of newness—with plenty of space, too, for the new books and apparatus that are being continually added.

If you are lucky enough to find him disengaged, there is a welcome from Dr. Hill, the Director of the Institute, and he himself is your conductor over the buildings. He shows you first a library, with central, double-sided book-cases of the most approved library order, then you pass on after him up broad flights of stairs to the regions above, "the work-rooms" of the institution, rooms in which brain sets itself to its stubborn fight against the wrong conditions, the almost hopeless blunders, the rash indiscretions which make the lives of so many poor humans miserable. "Brain against ignorance"—that is one of the impressions that knock at your consciousness as you follow your guide about the Institute of Public Health.

Here is a large lecture hall equipped with a powerful electric lantern for illustrating the talks given; here is another about which are ranged color charts showing food values, how much fat, how much protein, how much carbohydrates, how much water, how much ash, in all

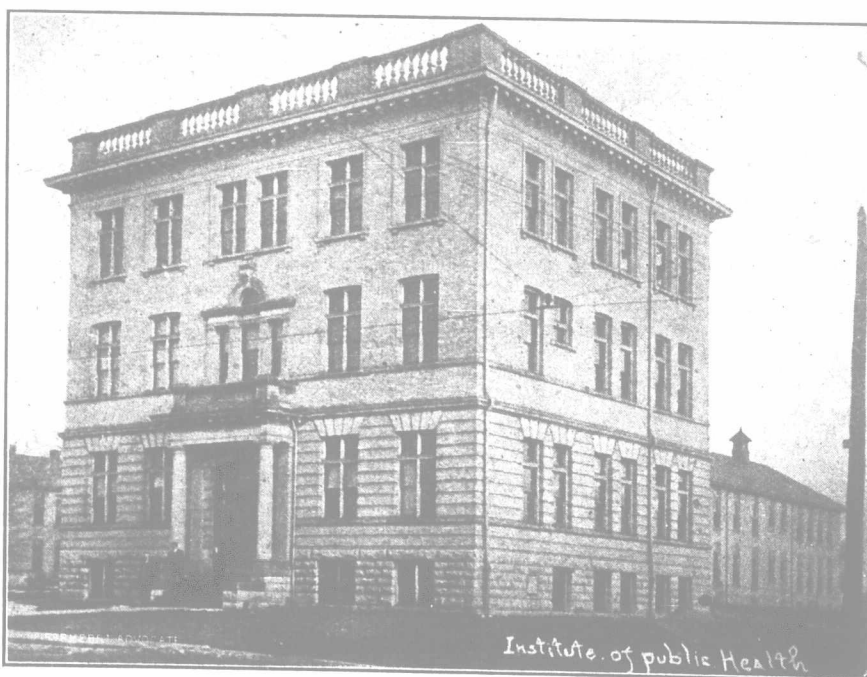
the common foods—oatmeal, wheat flour, corn meal, beef, pork, sugar, molasses, honey, nuts, potatoes, and all the rest.

At first glance one wishes it were possible to put miniatures of the charts in the hands of all the housewives the country over; and then one realizes that scientific instruction must needs accompany the charts, else how would the housewife know how to proportion the foods judiciously? It might be as dangerous to over-stuff with protein or carbohydrates as to under-feed in those essentials.—Just here it may be remarked that such instruction is available to those within reach of the Institute, for Dr. Hill and his staff are quite willing, as has been announced, to give lectures on condition that travelling expenses only are paid.

Now, don't rub your eyes and wonder how this miracle may be. True, this age is one of self-seeking and of graft, and you get little for nothing—but the Institute of Public Health has been established for the public good; the Government pays the salaries; there are no extra "plums"—so there you are.

Is there a suggestion here for the Women's Institute, in its continual quest for lecturers?

A peep into a laboratory in which students are taught practical work in chemistry, and then on to the most interesting departments in the building.



Institute of Public Health, London, Ont.

In a spacious, sunlit room to the westward you find Mr. Slack, the chemist of the Institution, busy among tubes, retorts, and sterilizers.

The room of Mr. Clarke, the Technical Assistant, is placed where the special scientific cooking necessary to prepare the special food for the germs is done. To show how vigorous these little creatures are, it requires some five hundred pounds of meat a year to feed them.

In the next room, presided over by Dr. Fiddler, the bacteriologist, you find the cultures going full blast, if anything so apparently still, yet so insidious, so deadly as cultures in which disease-bacilli

are reproducing, may be said to go full blast.

That is an innocent-looking array of little test-tubes on the shelf there, each plugged with a bit of white batting, each containing about a teaspoonful of jelly-like substance in the bottom, one clear, one yellowish, one purplish, yet another showing streaks of yellow or brown, but woe betide the careless meddler.

Dr. Hill lifts 'one out of the rack, "These tubes contain the cultures in which living disease germs are working," he says, "This one, for instance, contains cholera spirilla."

You look at it, fascinated by the horror of it, but he goes on taking out test-tube after test-tube.

"This one contains tuberculosis germs; this one anthrax; this one typhoid; this pneumonia, and this—leprosy."

Yes, literally, bottled death. Someone put those first germs, that have multiplied so, in that culture; someone must take them out; someone must experiment with them.—And so you catch a flash-light of the work that these men; and such as these, are doing the world over. Quietly they carry on their investigations, buried in their laboratories, and perhaps you seldom hear of them, but when you do you are glad that we have left the old days behind—the savage old days that glorified an Alexander, a Hannibal, or a Napoleon—and that we

A few bits of glass are lying there covered with a red substance that looks like cochineal dye. It is sputum covered with a substance that colors tuberculosis germs red. Presently the assistant pours over the mass a mixture of hydrochloric acid and alcohol, and instantly all the red is bleached out except, as will be revealed under the magnifying-glass, that which clings to the tuberculosis germs. There are other germs present also. An application of blue tints these, but the tuberculosis germs still remain red, and when you look at the slide through the microscope you behold them, little red, rod-like things, on a ground of blue!

"What a wonderful process!" you exclaim, "How was it ever found out?" And the doctor replies with a smile, "Those wonderful Germans, you know. They are always digging into things and making discoveries."

What a tribute to Germany!—and a deserved one.

Through the microscope also you may be shown, as were we, a brand-new typhoid bacillus, still wiggling, resembling a little thread-like, dark-colored worm.

An adjoining department contains an imposing array of stills for distilling water, and here you are told something of the process of analyzing water to determine its purity. In yet another are thousands of cards which have been sent out to mothers of the city and filled in by them, in course of an investigation into diseases of children.

"Do children really have to have measles and whooping-cough?" someone asks, and the doctor smiles.

"Emphatically, no," he replies. "The day will come when it will be considered just as disgraceful for a child to have measles or whooping-cough, as it now is to have vermin in its head."

—Disgraceful, you see, because so avoidable, if public and domestic conditions are all as they should be. Carelessness in regard to disease germs will, in that day, be looked upon with as much disapproval as is to-day carelessness in regard to cockroaches.

Finally you come to the "menagerie," filled with boxes of guinea pigs and rabbits, some of which bear markings of red or blue to show that they have been inoculated with the germs of various diseases. Guinea pigs, you are told, are especially susceptible to tuberculosis, their inoculation being, indeed, the finest test of that disease.

Here, too, were you to visit this department to-day, you would see one case containing eight turtles, some of which have been inoculated with the serum prepared by Dr. Friedmann, in regard to which controversy still rages.

And now, do you grasp all that is meant by the "New" Public Health? Do you realize what the establishment of this Institute and those similar to it may mean to YOU? Prevention rather than cure is the aim of the Institution. Were its ideals realized, doctors should be PREVENTERS of disease. They would give lectures, they would be custodians of the public health, they would be the reference encyclopædia of the people in regard to all matters of hygiene.