

ty have fallen short of accomplishing the work it was their duty to do is without parallel." The Council has appointed a large staff of school doctors, but they appear to have been employed in anything but the work they were required by statute to carry out. During last year there was no statutory medical examination at all in some 800 of the schools in the metropolitan area. It is a pity that the London education authority, which did good work in this respect when there was no legal compulsion to do it, should now be lagging behind the rest of the country. Since the end of last year, I believe, there has been an improvement in the medical examination work under the London County Council, and the report of the chief medical officer of that body, dealing with the health of the metropolis in 1909, shows that there is need for all that can be done to improve the health of the children of that great city.

It is too early yet to give exact and precise statistics as to the number of children who are suffering from disease or physical defects, but the report gives a general statement which shows to what an alarming extent the children in our day schools are suffering from ill-health and physical shortcomings. About 10 per cent. of the six million children attending the public elementary schools of England and Wales suffer from serious defect of vision, 3 to 5 per cent. suffer from defective sight, 1 to 3 per cent. have suppurating ears, 8 per cent. have enlarged tonsils so bad as to require surgical operation, 20 to 40 per cent. have extensive and injurious decay of the teeth, 40 per cent. have unclean heads, 1 per cent. suffer from consumption in an easily recognizable form, and a number suffer from heart disease. The chief medical officer remarks that: "It is to be feared that in the aggregate this formidable category of disease and defect means a large degree of suffering, incapacity, and inefficiency."

The medical examination of the children has revealed a very unsatisfactory state of things with regard to the cleanliness of the children. It will be seen from the figures given above that 40 per cent. of the children were found with unclean heads. In one western county 49.3 per cent. of the children had "nits." This is a state of things which need not exist, and one for which poverty is no excuse. It is satisfactory to note that there has been an improvement since the examinations first be-

gan. Some parents have resented the interference of the school authorities with the right of the parent to keep the child in a filthy condition. One child in a particularly objectionable state of uncleanness was sent home by the teacher with a note to its mother asking her to clean the boy. She sent back the boy in the original state with a note saying: "I sends my Jimmey to school for you to teach, not to smell. He aint a rose." But the parents who have in the past been neglectful of the condition of their children are now being shamed into keeping them in a more cleanly condition; and as filth is so often the mother of disease, the local authorities ought to have drastic powers to compel parents to keep the bodies of their children free from dirt. Some local authorities have excluded children from school on account of their filthy condition, and this has often had a good effect on the parent.

It is little use being in possession of the facts as to the physical condition of the children unless there is some provision by which those suffering from disease or defects may be treated. One of the chief values of this inspection is that defects are found of which the parent was quite ignorant, and by immediate attention to the matter the disease may be arrested or cured. Unless something is done to "follow up" the examination, both it and the cost of it is wasted. The local authority should systematically keep a record of all cases of disease or defect, and at regular intervals ascertain from the parent what is being done to treat the child. In most cases the parent will be in a position to obtain the medical or surgical treatment needed, but where he is too poor the child on no account ought to be neglected. The local authority should come to the assistance of such cases, either by helping the parent to get assistance from some voluntary society which exists to relieve such cases or by directly assisting the case themselves. There is always an inclination to neglect attending to a disease or defect which is not felt to be immediately serious, and it is to be feared that in most cases of slight defect—such as deficient hearing, or defective vision, or bad teeth, the parent will ignore the report of the school doctor unless he is pressed repeatedly not to do so. The importance of having the children grow up as healthy as possible is as great as it is that they should grow up intelligent.