

Sir George Newman's Report.

A State cannot effectually insure itself against physical disease unless it begins with the children.

Starting out with this general proposition, the chief medical officer of the local Board of Education of England and Wales, Sir George Newman, in his annual report just issued, traces the effects of the medical inspection which now play so important a part in school life. The obligatory organization of medical inspection dates from the beginning of 1908, and the actual machinery itself is now fairly complete, but it is pointed out that the effect of ameliorative work has not had time to show itself in the returns of existing disease, ailment, or defect. The amount of leeway yet to be made up may be gathered from the official statement that out of the 6,000,000 elementary school children in England and Wales—

10 per cent. suffer from defect in vision.

3 to 5 per cent. suffer from defective hearing.

6 to 8 per cent. have adenoids, or enlarged tonsils, or sufficient degree to obstruct the nose or throat and thus to require surgical treatment.

40 per cent. suffer from extensive decay of the teeth.

30 to 40 per cent. have unclean heads or bodies.

1 per cent. suffer from tuberculosis in readily recognisable form.

1 to 2 per cent. are afflicted with heart disease.

Moreover, a considerable percentage of children are suffering from a greater or less degree of malnutrition. The chief medical officer points out: "It cannot be doubted that in the aggregate this formidable category of disease and defects means a serious amount of suffering, incapacity, and inefficiency, which at least must greatly limit the opportunity and diminish the capacity of the child to receive and profit by the education which the State provides."

The moral is obvious. As Dr. Newman says: "Every step in the direction of making and keeping the children healthy is a step towards diminishing the prevalence and lightening the burden of the disease of the adult, and a relatively small rise in the standard of child health may represent a proportionately large gain in the physical

health, capacity, and energy of the people as a whole."

Are the local authorities doing their part? Many of them, Dr. Newman reports, are proving themselves fully equal to the occasion and the task, and though unwilling to burden the local rate, they are grappling with the situation with zeal as well as moderation and good sense. "It must be admitted, however, that in respect of both means and methods the way is difficult and hard," he adds, "partly because there is at present no Parliamentary grant in aid of this work and partly because of the complexity of the issues which are raised in relation to treatment."

In the whole School Medical Service in England there are now just five short of 1,000 medical officers at work, of whom 79 are women doctors. In addition 335 nurses give their whole or part time to the work. In the reports of these local school doctors there is a mass of instructive and entertaining facts from which we cull the following:—

Among Halifax children who did not work out of school hours, the average height was 59.6in., weight 81.5lb.; while among children employed out of school hours the height was 54in., and weight 67lb.

Dealing with the treatment of enlarged tonsils, Dr. Forbes (Brighton) thinks it should be a routine practice before the children commence breathing exercises that a "handkerchief parade" should be held. The number of children coming with handkerchiefs would increase.

Seventy authorities have sanctioned expenditure on spectacles for scholars. Last year £1,000 was spent under this head.

In a number of schools there are regular tooth-brush drills, each child being provided with a mug, tooth-brush and tooth powder.

At Wolverhampton the children are taught to wash themselves, to care for their hands and nails, to brush their hair, to mend their clothes, to wash dirty pinafores, to eat nicely and daintily, as well as many other matters of great value to them in every-day life.

An elaborate scheme of "mothercraft" teaching is carried out in a Tottenham school, the course including the washing and dressing of a baby doll, preparing and cleaning of clothes, cutting out and making clothes and other home-life matters. The