

flower ; but the number of such is too few. The description I have given portrays as correctly as I am able, the average surroundings, from a sanitary point of view of the schools in this, the best county of the Province.

In view of these facts, you will agree with me that the Provincial Board of Health has ample opportunity to effect much good by disseminating a knowledge of sanitary science applicable to our public schools.

SCHOOL AGE.

In conclusion, I ask a discussion on the question of the best age for the commencement of systematic education. My more limited experience corroborates that of Superintendent Harris of St. Louis, who says that children entering school at the age of eight years, are generally further advanced at thirteen than those entering at five. I have read that while the gray matter of the brain is but partially developed, no exercise of the reflective faculties or mental efforts involving exercise in abstract ideas should be allowed,—that all formal labour of the mind required before the seventh year, being in opposition to the laws of nature will prove injurious to the mind. Further, that such ossification of the lower vertebræ of the spine as will permit much resting of the body in a sitting posture, without injury, does not take place until the seventh year. If these statements be facts, the conclusion is inevitable that the minimum school age should be increased from five years as at present, to seven years at least. I am convinced by reasons other than the above, that a child of

but five years is too young to commence school. If we increase the minimum age to six years, we shall be in company with fifteen of the United States in this matter, and still a year below the minimum age prescribed in France.

The belief is gaining that intellectual contraction, and even moral obliquity can be traced directly to bad digestion. Let us spread the belief. If parents were anxious to rear their children good vigorous animals, as they seem to have them intellectual prodigies, or prim, fashionable young misses, it would be vastly better for the race. Even the school-master might rejoice, for his work of educating would be thereby rendered far more easy and successful. Were our boys and girls to live amidst favourable physical, mental, and moral surroundings, until they are fourteen or fifteen years of age, then—even were all props and guards torn away—they would in all likelihood continue to grow straight and strong. To accomplish this end, may you put forth every effort, and not weary until finally you, or those who wear your mantle, will be rewarded with complete success. Speed the time when dyspepsia and hypochondria will give way on every hand to vigorous digestion, the bounding pulse and their accompanying high spirits ; when the *mens sana in corpore sano* will be the rule and not the exception ; when instead of that formidable list of two hundred and forty-nine diseases classified in your first annual report, the number may in your last be reduced to euthanasia in old age and perhaps *thanatici*.