

## DISEASES INCIDENT TO SCHOOL-LIFE.

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The principal diseases incident to school-life are affections of the eyes, spinal deformity, nervous complaints, digestive disorders, and the infectious, or so-called contagious diseases. It is believed that through judicious sanitary measures, faithfully enforced, these may all be very much diminished, if not entirely prevented.

Good eyesight and hearing are very necessary qualifications of the successful pupil; and it is quite essential that the teacher should have a knowledge of these functions in every child, in order that children may be properly seated, and that unjust judgment or punishment be not visited upon innocent offenders. Many cases of supposed obstinacy or stupidity are readily explained by defective sight or hearing. A record of the sight and hearing should be made upon the roll-book. The teacher can obtain this by using a test card for sight and astigmatism, which may be purchased, with printed instructions, for a few cents. The card is hung in a good light and the eyes tested singly and together.

The hearing distance of both ears are tested by the teacher's watch, and the distance with which it is heard with each ear is noted. An examination of a dozen children will give the teacher a standard for comparison, and any marked deviation should be noted. These tests will serve all practical purposes, take but a few moments' time, and can easily be made by any teacher with possibly a few minutes' instruction.

Diseases of the ear occurring in childhood are usually the results of inflamed throats, catarrhal or nervous disease, and, except as school-life contributes to these causes, they cannot be fairly classed as school diseases. A child suffering from purulent discharge from the eyes or ears should be sent home and to the family physician for examination and a written report, as to danger of infection.

Far-sight is the natural condition of the human eye. Infants, with but few exceptions, are far-sighted. Savages are far-sighted.

Near-sight is pre-eminently a disease of school-life, and has been found to increase rapidly as school-life advances. One fact, among many which might be

offered, will illustrate this: In the Buffalo public schools the percentage of near-sightedness increased from five at seven years of age to twenty-six at eighteen years of age; and twenty-five per cent. of the graduates of the Buffalo High School were more or less near-sighted. It is generally conceded that badly arranged, crossed, directly reflected, or insufficient light, desks constructed which compel children to lean forward in reading or writing, small type, poor paper, bad presswork, and overwork, cause the tired and strained eyes gradually to change form; and thus myopia, or near-sightedness, is permanently established.

Children found to have a convergent squint when reading are usually far-sighted, and these, with such as are near-sighted, should be sent home for a report in writing from the family physician as to the advisability of continuing study without glasses.

Spinal deformity may also be classed as a disease largely incidental to school-life. Of one thousand cases of crooked growth, eight hundred and ninety took their rise between the ages of six and fourteen years. Authorities differ as to its frequency, varying from thirteen to twenty-nine per cent. Girls are affected to a much greater extent than boys.

The especial causes of curvature of the spine lie in improper positions assumed in writing, sitting, standing or walking, and made necessary sometimes by illy adapted desks and seats. The clothing of girls is often badly adjusted, forming pads of irregular height, upon which they sit. The greater elevation of one side throws the spinal column out of vertical line, which is partly compensated by a twisting of the trunk. Recently I walked back of one of our high school girls more than a mile and a half, and not once during that walk was her spinal column erect and straight, owing to a bag of heavy books carried from school. Subjected to these continued strains, the weakened ligaments and muscles of the vertebral column give way gradually, and spinal deformity results.

I believe that if the system of vertical writing were adopted, and that if children were taught to use both hands and arms, a principal cause of spinal curvature would be obviated.

Nervous disorders, headaches, hysterical attacks, etc., due to mental or emotional strain, improper food, insufficient ventilation, toxic odors, bad diges-