

## The Medical Inspection of Schools in Victoria, Australia

About eighteen months ago this movement, which might more properly be called the "Medical Examination of Schools," was instituted in Victoria. It is being organised upon lines in accord with the most up-to-date knowledge and thought in regard to the benefiting and developing of child life.

The work is enormous, and runs through many channels, though its object is but one, and that is the bettering the environment and conditions under which the child of Victoria grows up—the giving each child its chance of becoming a physically strong and healthy adult.

The work is a branch of the Education Department, organised by Dr. Harvey Sutton and his two colleagues, Dr. May Booth and Dr. Jean Greig.

It having been my privilege to speak with these three doctors, to see them examining the children, and giving lectures to the teachers and the parents, and being struck with their high ideals and the national character of their work, I felt sure that it would interest others in New Zealand to hear something of their methods.

Among Victorians there is deep loyalty to and pride in their own State, and desire that Victorians shall be Australians of the front rank, and so with its accurate attention to hygienic and other practical details, the keynote of the work the up-building of the nation.

By the awakening to knowledge, the position of the parent or teachers is raised to one of higher power and greater responsibility in regard to the individual child, home or school—for this in time spells State, Nation, Empire.

It is a pleasure to see the keen way in which these doctors are working out their plans; their thoughtful conceptions of what their work should embrace; their tactful but strong appeal to the individual parent to do his or her part.

The following quotations from the final report to Parliament will give some idea of the scope of their work, upon only a few points of which I intend to touch. The medical officers mention that "their atten-

tion has been chiefly concentrated on matters of organisation, on the various applications of the principle of hygiene and public health. Supplementary reports are furnished on:—

1. The importance of including systematic teaching of hygiene in all grades of public schools.
2. The value of school anthropometrics.
3. School buildings and playgrounds.
4. School cleansing.
5. Disinfection of schools.
6. Infectious diseases and epidemics.
7. Dental hygiene.
8. The backward and feeble-minded.
9. Record of past, and proposals of future work.
10. Calculation of the work of medical school inspectors, etc., and cost of same.
11. Collection of statistics, etc., together with tables and photographs."

Also these paragraphs speak for themselves:—

"There has come a realisation by the State of the obligation that the education it makes compulsory shall not mean the physical oppression of the child. Further, there has been a growing conviction that to secure a solution of the many grave problems of disease and degeneration in our community, the best and most economical method is, not to wait until the results have developed, and then provide for them in hospitals, asylums, gaols, and charities generally, but to attack these problems at the earliest possible moment. As Sir Lander Brunton puts it: 'It is better to pay pence for children than pounds for paupers.'"

"While it is not at present permissible to control parentage, the health and development of the human product, and control of his environment are matters very much at our disposal. It is felt that every child should have full opportunity to develop the best in him, and thus become a more efficient citizen."