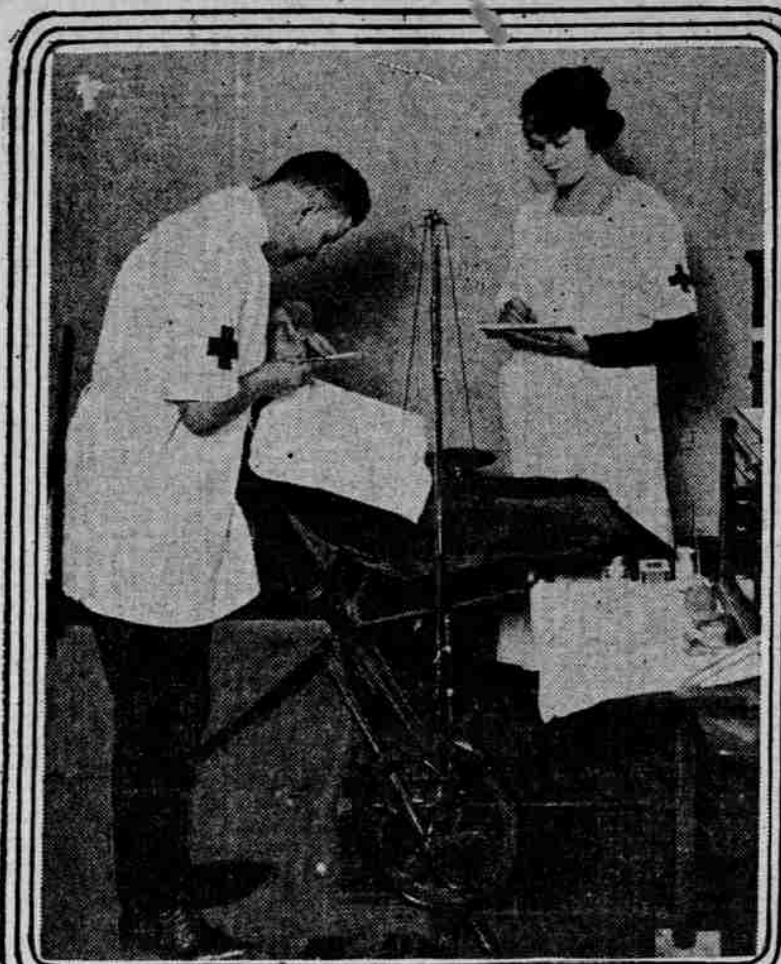


Greatest Asset of City Now Guarded

Prevention Measures Change Backward Children Into Efficient Citizens of Future.



Dentist Working Right in School Room.



Each Nurse Cares for 6000 Children.

BY DEWITT HARRY.
(Copyright, 1920.)

REALIZATION that a nation's wealth lies in her man power was brought home to the United States learned then that while its population on an average ranked high among the peoples of the globe there was room for much improvement. One vital factor in making the American the most efficient man in the world today is the public school system and educators freely state that the surface of this great institution is yet only scratched. It is only of late that the doctrine of teaching by means of play has become generally adopted in this country, and while they have realized for years that there must be some lucid explanation of the backward child, the reason and the cure have only been known for a short time.

Portland, often one of the prime movers in any far-reaching reform, seems to have fallen in the ruck in this matter, for she has taken but her first grasp on the possibilities. The new policy that seems to promise so much for the children of this country is the application of that old adage that "a stitch in time saves nine." Any well-directed survey of health and physical development in the average classroom will expose cases in which corrective measures can be applied with chances of success. The child is entitled to a square deal.

Backward Children Injure All.

Backward children in classes act on the whole so that it is not only for the individual good that these measures are attempted. One of the first discoveries that led to the development of this work was that many children suffered from poor eyesight and some care was taken to provide facilities for testing and correcting vision. A child handicapped by a set of eyes that will not focus properly is manifestly at a disadvantage, for not only is the continual strain present but as a result come headaches and other contributory illness.

Here was food for thought for the workers who sought for the best in the child. Were there not other contributory causes? Later surveys revealed thousands of children suffering from other defects that could be easily remedied and which, as soon as corrected, usually proved that all children, at the same period in their development, could accomplish nearly the same tasks. The goal then was set to develop the average child, one who had complete control of the faculties with which he or she was endowed by nature. This was manifestly the right of all free-born children.

Hungry Youngsters Are Fed.

In this respect—through no fault of the child itself, who has nothing to say about its birth or the conditions thereof—it was found that many parents could not or would not afford proper nourishment. Another phase of nearly similar nature that was found fairly general was that living conditions, that is to say sleeping and other quarters, were so restricted that the best interests of the child could not be conserved. It is impossible for a child who might be suffering from some easily corrected weakness who has not the proper food or who is forced by misfortune to sleep in a room occupied by six other persons, to come into the school room and hold its own in competition with



Dr. Edna Sherrill Eames, Chief Health Inspector Portland Schools.

well nurtured and well cared for average mental children.

But, you'll say, there surely is nothing of this kind in Portland. No? Just go and search it out. There are hundreds of cases of children who come to school in this rich, well favored city each morning after a poor night's rest in a room surcharged with the exhalations of too many humans, after a cold breakfast or one of strong coffee and toast, who may be afflicted with some minor weakness that could be easily corrected if they were given the proper care, and yet they have to go to school and study. Try it for yourself, you grownups. Just figure out what would occur were you to attempt a full day's work in your office after sleeping in a close room with six other people and had a breakfast of sloppy coffee and dry toast. Then if you were short-sighted and suffered from eye strain. Impossible to earn a living under those conditions, yes, and impossible to study when your mind is distracted by the yearnings of an unsatisfied stomach and a headache or congested lungs.

Mothers Wage Stiff Battle.

In one school district where a number of mothers live who have been abandoned by the fathers of their children, gritty women who are trying to make the best of a fight with life, there are literally hundreds of these children, suffering from one or the other and sometimes with all of the complaints that have been enumerated above. It is torture for them and this is what the city of Portland is now trying to prevent with a manifestly undermanned staff, judging by a comparison with other

cities. Dr. Edna Sherrill Eames, chief health inspector of the Portland schools, has but five nurses under her charge, which means that each of these women has to care for some 6,000 children. In the neighboring city of Seattle, which has but a trifle larger enrollment in their public schools, they have 25 women engaged in similar work. Portland spends about \$10,000 annually in this work, Cleveland, Ohio, \$130,000 and no other city on the Pacific coast as small a sum as Portland. But with this small staff Portland is accomplishing wonders.

Protection of the children, self-respect, average intelligence, cleanliness and co-operation between teachers, parents and the school health bureau is what is essential. It is doubtful if any city can show better results for this kind of work than has been the case here since its inception. The bloom of health has been brought to the cheeks of thousands of children since the first public school nurse was put to work ten years ago.

How the cases are found? Just an example of recent days. A child each day seemed so drowsy that she could not study. She would go to sleep in the classroom, appeared weak and listless. The health nurse was told of the case. An examination showed that she was manifestly undernourished. The mother and two sisters lived in one room with this and another child. They slept, ate and all in the tiny place, the three women worked, went to their daily grind early and left the children to care for themselves. The youngsters got what breakfast there was, usually a

cold cup of coffee and a few crusts of dry toast, and then went to school. For lunch they had just what they could find in the room. The result, they were thin, undernourished, went to sleep in the school room from sheer weariness, and found it impossible to keep up in their studies.

Corrective Measures Applied.

A few years back this kind of a child would have been regarded as helpless. Not now, the nurse easily found out what was the matter by a little investigation with the result that Portland stepped in and took charge of these neglected tots. The mother was told to leave them sufficient food for a good meal in the morning and better living quarters found. Then the city nurse would send them home each morning at the recess period after giving them a half pint of hot milk and gave them instructions that they were to lie down and sleep until time to return to the afternoon session. Arrangements were perfected to see that they received a hot meal at noon and the change was marvellous. Within a week one of the children gained nine pounds in weight and showed that she could more than hold her own in the classroom. She was not tired and did not have to get her rest during the study periods and the mother, poor woman, she did not realize that she was not giving her children a square deal. She loved them and wanted to do what was right, was so grateful to the city nurses that it was touching.

The result of this one case where the two children were given the right nourishment and rest is that Portland will gain two high-class citizens when their education is completed. Instead of two poorly developed specimens both physically and mentally as would have been the case had they been allowed to take their own course. The physical and mental development of any child is so closely akin that they cannot easily be divorced. A youngster in good health is

nearly always found to be the superior of one who is a weakling, and the thing to do then is to step in and correct the weakness as much as possible.

Nurse Cares for 6000 Cases.

The history of the development of this highly essential work in Portland is brief. About ten years ago the first school nurse was put to work and at the time that war was declared Portland had four physicians working half time in addition. It was just about a year ago that the city decided that we should follow the trail that had been blazed by other localities and placed five nurses at work on full time. These nurses receive the small salary of \$110 per month for nine months in the year and have no vacation period. In 1915 Dr. Eames took charge of the city schools as chief health inspector, coming here from Los Angeles where she had gained some experience in similar work. She is a graduate of the University of Southern California. With about 35,000 children under their charge the five nurses in Portland have an average of 6,000 pounds in weight and showed that she could more than hold her own in the classroom. She was not tired and did not have to get her rest during the study periods and the mother, poor woman, she did not realize that she was not giving her children a square deal. She loved them and wanted to do what was right, was so grateful to the city nurses that it was touching.

At the opening of every school term there is a survey made to determine if there is any chance for contagion. In case there is anything found, as for example diphtheria, cultures are taken, from each child exposed, by the school nurse every day until the chance of an epidemic is at an end or until the incubation period is completed and the situation is under control and the school can be released in safety. During the last year a smallpox epidemic caused the vaccination of 15,000 children, only those being exposed in some manner to the disease receiving the serum treat-



Under Nourished, They Gained Nine Pounds in One Week.



Daily Milk Ration for Mal-Nutrition Cases.

ment. During the time of vaccination there is a nurse in attendance every day until the children are completely recovered so that their arms may be raised. During the 1920 season the nurses placed over 300,000 dressings for vaccination alone, the pupils receiving attention for 21 days after their arms had been treated. Not one of these cases developed any infection. Quite a good proportion of this work was done in the high schools.

Contagion Spread Checked.

Any pupil that is away from school for three days for any contagious disease, must, by health board rules, report before admission and get a permit before returning to the classroom. Of some 15,000 cases of this character handled last year, 2,000 were excluded until fully recovered. This meant that many children who were not fully recovered and from whom there was yet danger of contagion were held away from the others. One example was of a child that had been suffering from chicken pox and that yet bore on its body the scars from the eruption. The mother wanted it back in school for it was able to walk and was strong enough and was very angry when the child was sent home for a few more days. This has to be done in order to protect the other children.

The school nurses themselves treat such things as ringworm, impetigo, scabies, and pediculosis, all non-contagious diseases whose spread can easily be checked. After the survey for contagion at the beginning of the term comes the search for corrective work. A school room examination is made of each child to determine the condition of the nose and throat to find adenoids and bad tonsils. At this time the eyes and the hearing are also tested. As a result of this examination advisory cards are sent to the parents and followed up later with home visits when required. In many cases the financial condition of the parents

will not permit them making the proper correction in the children and then it becomes necessary for this department of the city to function. During the past year 125 pairs of glasses were furnished by the city of Portland and over 100 adenoid and tonsil operations performed which the parents would have been unable to provide otherwise.

Deformities Are Corrected.

At the neighborhood house on Second and Wood streets there is held each Saturday morning a free nose and throat clinic. Specialists donate their services and two of the school nurses are in attendance. The only cost to the parents for necessary operations is for linen and ether. Orthopedic cases and deformities which parents are unable to have corrected by their own physician are cared for by the school health bureau by the state cripple act. There were 36 of these cases during 1920, they being bowlegs and of such nature.

A period of stress for this bureau comes with a contagion alarm and everyone in the department gets busy at once and rushes to the scene. Physicians' reports of contagion among children are closely checked into the neighborhood schools with the result that one day on a recent inspection three cases not known to exist were found in the same school where a child was reported ill. The expense to the city under such circumstances is small and the saving to parents large and life loss is held low.

Model School System Starts.

Maximum efficiency can only be obtained where a card index can be kept on every pupil. So far this has only been done in the Buckman School where Principal Geary last fall started checking the physical development of every student. The Oregon Tubercular Association made this work possible by placing a full time nurse here and as a result

(Continued on Page 7.)