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A Day With the School Nurse

By Laura M. French

THERE was a scrambling to get shoe laces untied when Miss Florence Newman, Red Cross public-health nurse, told the children in School District No. 96 that they must take off their shoes before being weighed on the pretty white scales which she asked one of the big boys to bring in from her car. The shoes wouldn't hurt the scales, Miss Newman told them, but if they all wore thick-soled, heavy shoes such as she was wearing, each pupil would be given credit for several pounds which didn't belong to him or her.

Weighing and measuring the children is a part of the regular work of this nurse, who makes the rounds of the 116 school districts in her county. Sometimes children are found—one or two in almost every school—who are not up to the normal requirements in height or weight, and this means they are undernourished, the Red Cross nurse tells them. Then she asks them what they like best to eat and drink, and sometimes she is shocked when several little hands answer yes to her inquiry if any of the children drink tea or coffee.

"But we don't like milk," they protest when Miss Newman tells them they should drink at least a quart of milk every day.

"Drink it anyway," she advises, "and you'll learn to like it. If you'll drink a quart of milk every day it won't be long before you will weigh what little boys and girls of your age should weigh." Invariably it is the coffee and tea drinkers who are underweight.

Often several of the parents come to the schoolhouse "to see what that Red Cross nurse is up to," but seldom is objection raised to her work. Frequently several of the parents in a district are present at a morning meeting, and sometimes all the parents are there. When noon comes they unload big baskets of food, and all enjoy a picnic dinner. Miss Newman encourages the parents to come, as she can make them understand the needs of the children much better than can the children in telling the parents what the nurse has said.

Health Examinations

MOST of the parents work in harmony with the nurse; and after a few weeks, during which they drink plenty of milk and eat only the most nourishing food, little pale children begin to pick up.

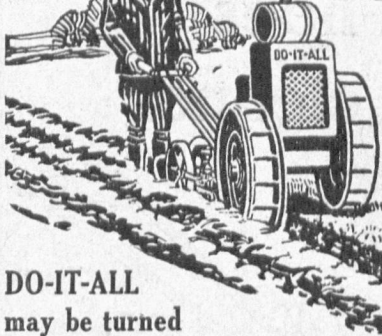
General health examinations are given by Miss Newman, in which she finds the condition of the children as regards tonsils, adenoids, teeth, nose, posture, hearing and sight. Wherever defects are found they are reported to teachers and parents, and the latter are advised as to consulting a physician.

Weighing and measuring is a delightful game for the children, but the taking of throat cultures by the nurse is a fearsome proposition to many of them. Few of the children admit being frightened, but in almost every school at least one child cries, sometimes two or three. The little white swab looks terrifying, but the children are reassured by nurse and teacher. The teacher's throat is the first one swabbed, and when the children see her come out of the ordeal smiling they lose their fears.

Each throat culture is put in a tiny bottle, labeled with the child's name, age and school. The bottles are taken to the county seat, to the research laboratory of Lance Hill, where, as the nurse explains to the children, the bottles are put in an incubator—being farm children, they know what an incubator is—and in a day or two, if there are diphtheria germs in any of the throats examined, they will have hatched. Mr. Hill or Miss Newman will phone at once to the teacher or the parents, and a doctor will be called. Children found to be carriers are kept out of school until two negative cultures have been taken. If there are no other developments this proves they are no longer carriers.

More than 4000 cultures have been examined by Mr. Hill since the movement to take cultures from the throats of children in the county and city schools was started in an effort to prevent the spread of diphtheria. It has been checked, and few children, comparatively, have been kept out of school.

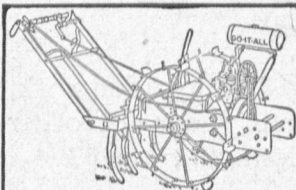
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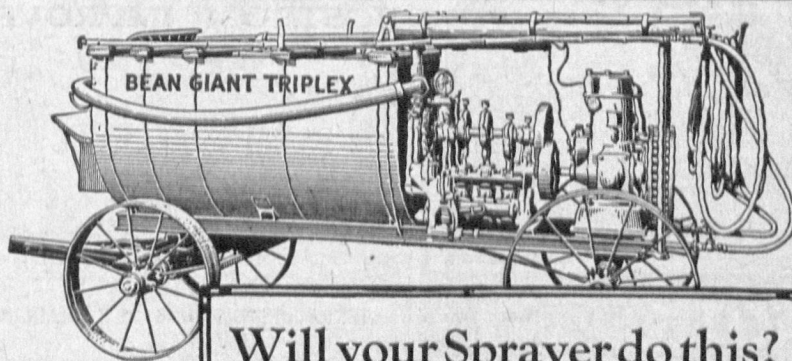
Information on both by writing for Catalog "9"

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