

Mental Deficiency Not Always the Cause of 'Dullness.'

WHY do some children fail to make progress at school, while others succeed?

Thousands of children and parents were asked this question after the examinations at the end of the recent school term. In many cases the parents, teachers, and even the children themselves, agreed that it was because of seeming stupidity.

There are at least forty reasons why some children appear dull, but, according to those who should know, stupidity is not included.

Only in the cases of children who are absolutely idiotic, they say, is the trouble irremediable, and even then the surgeon's knife may prove available.

Principal of the reasons given for bad showing on the part of pupils is poor eyesight—a medical inspector in the public schools of a large city says it accounts for 75 per cent. of "backwardness." The suggestion has been made that a benefaction which would furnish free eyeglasses to poor school children would greatly improve the mentality of the nation.

Malnutrition, adenoids, cigarettes, lack of play and inflexibility of promotion scheme are named as other important reasons. With the proper understanding of the backward pupil, the schoolroom "dunce" is fast passing into a memory.



No Time for Healthful Play—Must Work at Night Instead of Studying.

poor eyesight—although in their own or some cases opinion the reason may have been "dullness"—many children are compelled to drop out of the work of acquiring an education before the higher grades are reached.

In the grammar grade over 50 per cent. had defective vision; in the third and fourth years, primary grade, almost 50 per cent.

Another class of children examined belonged to the poorer families, and were more or less neglected. Of 250 of these examined, almost 70 per cent. had defective vision, and less than 1 per cent. wore glasses, showing total neglect—they were considered backward in school.

"They were not backward—no more so than those better class children in the other schools," said Dr. Wessels, "but through neglect they were unable to develop their natural capacity for study."

Think of the citizenship timber that is thus wasted every year—discouraged, unprotected, untrained children who, if given proper medical attention, might be among the brightest in the land!

GERMAN CHILDREN OFTEN END LIVES
In Germany many school children commit suicide every year. They think life is not worth living because their studies seem beyond them. In fact, it is because they are not accommodated to their studies. More glasses, operations, attention to nutrition, would save these little lives for the government that needs them.

Dr. Wessels took occasion to follow up the school records of children he had examined and treated to determine whether his theory was correct. Here are two actual instances which he has supplied:

A boy, 9 years old; in second year of school; should have been in fourth year; considered stupid and mentally deficient; high degree of myopia; after his correction, he has been promoted every year.

"I have many similar cases in my notebook," said Dr. Wessels. "Results would be better if the recommendation for glasses could in all cases be carried out. Many parents are too poor to buy glasses. This would be a good opportunity for some charitable organization or individual philanthropist."

"For a sum no larger than our millionaires often donate to a religious or educational purpose, a fund could be endowed to procure glasses for poor children. Not only would this aid tens of thousands of children to get educations—it would aid them all their lives, would make them healthy and brilliant citizens. There is no charity I can think of which could do so much good for such a moderate sum."

"In many instances the small cost of a pair of glasses would be a lifelong benefit to some little struggling pupil with an undeserved reputation for stupidity and mental deficiency. And this opinion is the result of examining 10,000 children during fifteen years' experience."

"In some instances the teachers have paid for glasses out of their own meager purses, so pathetic has been the need for it under their care."

Progressive Glasgow, Scotland, has lately devoted much attention to eyesight of children, and out of 52,403 examined, 18,555 were below the standard for vision.

Children feel keenly the stigma of being called "stupid" because they have failed to pass an examination. How keenly they feel it is evidenced by a whole incident told by a woman principal of a Philadelphia public school. A boy of 13, destined to spend another year in



Examining Children for Physical Defects.



Can't Go to School Ashamed of Her Clothes.



Impure Confections and 'Roky Poky' Harmful.

Here are the Forty Reasons for "Backwardness"

1. Poor eyesight
2. Underdeveloped teacher
3. Unwholesome diet
4. Poor clothing
5. Adulterated confections
6. Not enough sleep
7. Sleep in unventilated room
8. Sleep with too many in a room
9. Out late at night
10. The cigarette habit
11. The liquor habit
12. The tea and coffee habit
13. Intemperance of parent or parents
14. Has to permit the baby
15. Has to work at home
16. Not permitted to play
17. Too fond of play
18. Insufficient exercise
19. Parents lack interest
20. Mother has to work
21. Immorality in home
22. Unsuited to school system
23. Natural bent ignored
24. Stepmother
25. Abused by schoolmates
26. Headache from bad stomach
27. Adenoids, or irritating mouths
28. Clothing uncomfortable
29. Teacher favors others
30. Enforced absence by sickness
31. Urged to undue exertion
32. The dunce's stool
33. Lack of special school facilities
34. Honor not appealed to
35. Too lazy
36. Lack of promotion

Health in many cities, inspectors—regular members of the medical profession—whose duty it is to visit every school building in the city twice a week. Every pupil is thoroughly examined upon admission, and casually examined on every visit of the inspector to the school.

There are card systems where the complete histories of the pupils are kept and revised as required. The style of card used in one of the big cities of the East is divided into twelve columns.

In the first the teacher is required to state the number of sessions that the pupil has been absent in a year; in the second, the number of times late; and then, in order, these things must be reported upon: Grades exempted from; number of times examined; number of times failed; condition of eyes; condition of ears; condition of throat; condition of nose; condition of skin; orthopedic condition.

This last refers to any deformity of the body. All deformities are reported upon, but that most often found relates to the spine.

Thousands upon thousands of children appear dull, stupid, simply on account of their spines.

Perhaps the curvature is slight, may be remedied by a little manipulation. Perhaps it will require longer treatment. At any rate, the treatment is ordered, and if the parents be too poor to pay for it, it is done at the expense of the city.

And once those nerves which follow the course of the spine have become adjusted so that they, in nature intended them, to the mind of the pupil become brighter; he no longer fails at examinations, he takes

an interest in his studies, becomes transformed from a stupid into a brilliant child.

Dr. John J. Cronin, chief medical inspector of the New York schools, is of the opinion that fully 95 per cent. of school children fail to adequately profit by the present school system on account of physical troubles which could be remedied.

He and his assistants have performed over 10,000 operations for adenoid growths—which, irritating the

PAPER TO CLOTHE US, THE LATEST SARTORIAL IDEA

THE time is here when dignified Augusta, Maine, or graceful Richmond, Va., or energetic Elizabeth, N. J., or breezy Denver, Col., may sweep aside the paper portiere of her dressing room, attire herself in her paper skirt and invisible paper shirtwaist, don her paper hat and, taking along all the paper money she happens to have handy, go downtown and buy a few more dozen of the new paper napkins that go so well with the new paper tablecloths.

For the age is at last ready to become an age of paper, all the way from the paper string that ties up the package of paper napkins to the paper sheets between which Augusta, in Maine; Adelaide, out in Australia; Washington, Lincoln or Franklin, almost anywhere in the United States, can sleep for the paper-covered future.

FANCIFUL FRANK STOCKTON, a generation ago, made his escape from the famous lady and the tiger—the success which rendered it nearly impossible for him to sell what he wrote immediately afterward—by telling the story of the penurious plumber who slept under a blanket of newspapers—not because the newspapers of the day put you to sleep, but because newspapers at night were warmer than woolen blankets.

It was a story that was all the more amusing for being so true; and not the least truthful of its features was the declaration that a newspaper is one of the warmest things—quite apart from the big type and colored scare head of today—that humanity can put itself next to.

Street car conductors, on cold and slushy days, often risk a quarrel at the car barn or a suspension by the superintendent by laying a thickness of news-

paper on the rear platform.

Any number of workers exposed to long hours of cold find newspaper between coat and vest better protection than a chamolite or woolen chest protector—as warm, in fact, as a rubber coat, without inducing the weakening perspiration of crotchet.

Perhaps Stockton's story inspired the ever-inventive Germans to try their hands at obtaining practical results, perhaps it didn't. But the results are here, anyway.

Process after process, patent after patent, have conspired to make paper—common, ordinary paper—available for yarn. The strange thing about the outcome of twenty years of experiment is that the material made of paper loses all its heating properties, and, in the last analysis, adapts itself best to articles of apparel in which warmth is not to be desired.

SPUN FROM PAPER BANDS
The manufacture is not very intricate. Rags, wood—almost anything that will make good paper—are ground up into a pulp. The pulp, drawn out on wire-cloth drums, forms narrow bands of paper which are partly dried and then spun into yarn. The yarn can be beautifully dyed, and treatment with chemicals gives it strength, elasticity and a glistening smoothness.

One variety of the paper yarn is being used for the making of girdles, suspenders, edgings and similar material. Another makes tablecloths, towels, buckram, linings, sackings, hangings, upholstery goods and even rugs. It comes into service as an ally of its predecessor in the making of the bagging for the increasing cotton crop. It is simply strong enough, and it lasts as long as jute ever dares last.

Not only has cord made of the paper been used extensively for tying up packages, but sacks made of woven paper have been found to give good service as mail sacks.

Fish gelatin has lent to the fabrics made of paper a property which constitutes the final test of practical utility—resistance to moisture. They are wearable, pliable, washable, dryable—perhaps boilable and irrefragable, for all anybody knows to the contrary.

Soaked in water for a day and a night and then allowed to dry, they prove to be as strong as ever, and the only difference detected is a slight shrinkage. There is no doubt that they would stand frequent exposure to rain as well as, and possibly better than, many cloths and muslins now in general use at much higher prices.

With the loss of the heat-retaining properties that characterize the ordinary sheet of paper, the new cloth becomes even cooler than cotton for wear as a garment. But that is an immensely valuable asset, for it makes the stuff peculiarly suited to all warm climates and to the torrid summer season of many so-called temperate zones.

A boon thrice blessed it can be to thousands of summer workers, as well as idlers, men as well as women, whom it will enable to comply with the proprieties and still be as comfortable as though they were discarding half the clothing which the conventional compel them to wear.

Its utilities cover the needs of humanity from foot to head, for already straw hats are made of paper and jamming a pulp mill into its peaceful former, the future seems to hold out the promise that the modern Adam and Eve will soon be able to promenade into the dreamy woodland in the morning and come out with a couple of trunks of stylish rig leaves in the afternoon.

Which is getting back at nature with a vengeance.

For instance, in a public school in a good neighborhood, out of 800 children examined, 444, or more than 55 per cent., had errors in refraction. In the opinion of Dr. L. C. Wessels, an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist, who gathered statistics for this article, defective eyesight was the prime reason for apparent backwardness in these schools.

He was not content to secure figures on errors in refraction. He showed by comparison how the percentage of children having poor eyesight grew less as the higher grades were reached, indicating that on account of

the third grade, flung his arms about his mother's neck and begged, "Oh, mother, pray to God that I may be made like other boys."

It was like other boys, only he was not understood. Recognizing this as a case of retarded mental development, the principal of a school for "incorrigibles"—there are no incorrigibles, by the way—had him placed in a class of fifteen backward boys, where he might do a year's work in two years, and not feel that he was falling behind.

The age of six or seven is the time when children need special attention in regard to "backwardness."

Frequently at that age they develop nasal growths which make it very difficult to study. An adult who finds his mental mechanism obstructed by a cold in the head for a day or two is quick to have it remedied, but the child is often neglected.

In the special school, manual training is used to teach the mind through the hand—the very thing that many a child needs to cure its apparent stupidity.

Brain surgery is sometimes, but rarely, resorted to in order to cure children of mental defects. In time it may become quite common. As yet, medical science is not far enough advanced to localize seats of moral defects in the brain. An operation would be indicated only where there is an external manifestation of a localized internal lesion.

SURGERY A GREAT AID
Removal by surgery of defects which cause restlessness is always advised—such defects as growths in the ear, nose, or throat.

The flexible scheme of promotions is considered by many experts to be a great aid to what might be called "backwardness of pupils."

Some time ago a Chicago woman, Mrs. Daniel Munro, propagated a plan to provide 8000 underdressed school children with breakfasts each morning. "If a child cannot pay even a penny, he will be welcome to eat what he wants at our restaurant," exclaimed Mrs. Munro.

In other places the quantity of nourishment is held to be of not so much account as the quality. "No tea or coffee should be given school children," said a physician. "The food should be sufficient and wholesome—little more could be said."

It is the stuff that children buy about the school-house more than that they get at home that injures their stomachs and their blood.