

Notes on the objects of the National League for Physical Education and Improvement.

Contributors

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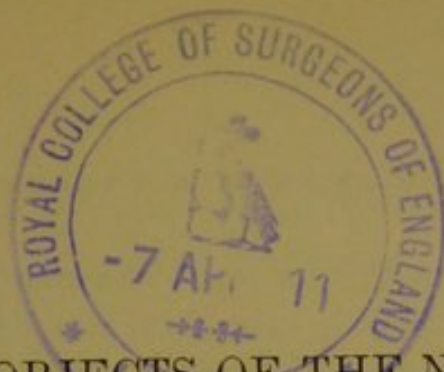
Notes and reflections
by Thomas A. J. ...
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NOTES ON THE OBJECTS OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND IMPROVEMENT.

MEMBERS of the League are often asked the questions:—

- (1) What are the objects of the League?
- (2) What do you intend to do?

The objects of the League are numerous, but for the sake of convenience they may be shortly summed up on the fingers of one hand thus—

- (1) To save the babies.
- (2) „ help the children.
- (3) „ train the youths.
- (4) „ instruct the parents.
- (5) „ lessen the drink.

The second question is, What does the League intend to do in order to attain these objects?

Before answering this question positively, it may be well to state what the League does **not** intend to do.

It does **not** intend to interfere in any way with any society which is already working for these objects.

On the contrary, it hopes to help each and all of them in the work they are already carrying on by making them known to each other, so that they can render mutual assistance and extend the good work done by those societies already in existence to other places where it is wanting.

If we compare all these societies to the bundle of sticks in the fable, which separately were easily broken but united resisted every attack, the League may be said not to be a new stick added, but to be the band that holds them together.

Having given this explanation of what the League **does**

not intend to do, we may now consider what it **does** intend to do.

(1) To save the babies. The mortality amongst children under the age of 5 is enormous, and under the age of 1 it is simply appalling. This awful mortality is due—

- (1) To the weakness of mothers.
- (2) „ ignorance of mothers.
- (3) „ carelessness of mothers.
- (4) „ imperfect milk supply.

(1) The weakness of mothers prevents them from suckling their offspring. The ignorance or carelessness of mothers makes them feed their infants on food which is unsuitable for them, and in consequence they either die, or their health is impaired and their strength enfeebled.

But even when mothers are neither ignorant nor careless they are often unable, especially in towns, to obtain pure milk, however desirous they may be of doing so.

In order to lessen the weakness of mothers, and give them a chance of suckling their children, the League desires that every woman about to become a mother should become known to it, in order that measures may be taken to give her rest—or at any rate only easy work, without strain—for at least a month before and a month after her confinement. Information of the expected confinement may be obtained either by the woman herself giving notice at the nearest office of the League, or by the medical man or midwife to whom she applies for attendance doing so. At first it would be most likely the latter; but as the League and its objects become more widely known, the woman herself would probably give the requisite information. The required rest before and after confinement might be obtained in many cases by the aid of district nurses or voluntary helpers, who would do the heavier work for the mother. In some cases, however, where the earnings of the mother form an essential part of the income of the household, it may be necessary to subsidise her. The funds for this purpose would require at first to be obtained from voluntary contributions, but later on, when the necessity of some provision of this sort becomes

known to the working classes themselves, the necessary money might be subscribed by themselves, in the same way as strike funds are maintained at present.

As soon as the expected confinement is known to the League a lady visitor in the district will be notified, and she will visit the prospective mother and give her the information required about the mother's own health, the care she should take, the risks she should avoid, and the preparation in the way of baby clothes, &c., which she ought to make, helping her if necessary, or arranging with other women of the mother's own class in life to help.

As soon as the baby is born, notice should again be given at the nearest office of the League, and again a visitor would go to the mother and give such advice and assistance as might be needed.

At Huddersfield the Mayor, Mr. Broadbent, has initiated a remarkably ingenious, generous, and successful scheme for obtaining early information of a birth by offering a reward of one shilling to the person who brings the first news of it to him. He has also put a premium on careful nourishment by offering a gift of one sovereign to each baby on its attaining the age of one year. It is to be hoped that similar generosity may be found in other large towns, and, at any rate, that immediate registration of every birth may be obtained.

It is obvious that the lady visitors who are to instruct the mothers must themselves be well instructed, and provision must be made for this either by the agency of the National Health Society, or by others.

In order to provide pure milk it is quite unnecessary for municipalities to become dairy farmers. The work they have to do is to take such measures that the purveyors shall be obliged to supply pure milk under penalty of withdrawal of the municipal licence.

There is already at Glasgow a plan followed by which milk perfectly pure can be supplied to the consumers in pure sealed bottles at a price no higher than that paid at present for ordinary milk, the increased price of transport being covered by the diminution in loss from souring. At present in order

to prevent souring, milk is either sterilized by boiling, or various so-called preservatives are added to it. The disadvantage of preservatives is that while they prevent souring they do not entirely prevent other changes occurring in the milk whereby it may become not only injurious but poisonous to human beings.

Sterilizing the milk by heating is free from this disadvantage, but it gives the milk a taste which is less pleasant than that of unboiled milk, and it destroys certain substances naturally contained in the milk which render it more easy of digestion and assimilation. Boiled milk is said to render children fed upon it more liable to rickets than children fed upon fresh milk. The plan by which pure milk is secured in Glasgow is simply the preservation by perfect cleanliness from the moment the milk leaves the cow until it is consumed. The milkman must carefully wash the cow's udder and then his own hands before milking. The milk is drawn into a perfectly clean pail from which any putrefactive germs have been removed by boiling water or steam. It is then conveyed to a perfectly clean refrigerator where it is cooled down, and it is then put into perfectly clean bottles which are sealed and are thus delivered to the consumer, so that all risk of contamination is avoided.

The risk of disease being conveyed by the milk is avoided by the cows being examined by a veterinary surgeon so as to ascertain that they are free from tuberculosis, or other disease communicable by milk, and by the milkmen being kept apart from any one who is at all likely to convey infection. The object of the League in relation to milk will be, first of all, to have a comprehensive scheme drawn up by experts for supplying pure milk and next to bring this scheme before the notice of various municipalities with the object of having it carried out. In addition to this, however, it will probably be necessary to extend the powers of medical officers of health and to obtain the sanction of the legislature to inspection and registration of farms so that the sources of the milk may be kept pure.

Another object of the League will be to further physical

education in schools. A great deal is being done in this direction by the Board of Education, but there is a want of proper training schools throughout the country sufficient to supply the increased demand for teachers of physical education. Besides, there is at present no means of securing a uniform standard of knowledge and power of instruction amongst the teachers. To obtain this it is advisable that a national institute or central institute should be formed for the purpose, first, of holding examinations and granting diplomas to qualified teachers. The training schools for physical education already existing in the country should be recognised and affiliated by this institute, but only after they have given satisfactory proof to the institute that they possess the qualifications which it may deem necessary. In order to supplement these, however, and provide instruction for larger numbers of teachers than can be met by these schools as well as to provide special courses of instruction and training in special branches not given in these schools, it is advisable to institute a large school in London. An institute of this sort has recently been opened at Dunfermline under the auspices of the Carnegie trustees. The lines upon which this school have been founded are so good that it might serve as a model for a school in London.

The question of the proper feeding of children in schools is also one that should engage the early attention of the League, and it will use its efforts to secure that school children shall be properly fed, while at the same time the burden of feeding them should be thrown on the parents and not upon the ratepayers. The extension of cookery schools and classes of cookery for mothers will form another branch of activity of the League.

Another object of the League will be to endeavour to secure universal medical examination of school children so that those who suffer from defects of the eyes, ears, or teeth, may be saved from the discomfort, pain, and even danger to life which such defects might entail if allowed to remain without attention.

The provision of playgrounds will also occupy the attention

of the League, and efforts will be made to secure them for school children both in town and country by the united action either of municipal bodies or of private individuals, or of both. Occupation and amusement for children and youths after the hours of work are over, so as to prevent any tendency to hooliganism, will also form another department. Through the efforts of the Twentieth Century League, which has now become amalgamated with the National League, the Education Department of the London County Council have given permission for children to play in the school yards after school hours, provided they are supervised by voluntary inspectors. The example thus set may be extended to other towns. The training of youths in habits of obedience and discipline will be fostered by co-ordinating and extending the system of boys' brigades, &c., and establishing similar organisations where these do not already exist.

Instruction of parents will be effected as far as possible by disseminating instructive books and pamphlets, and by lectures and demonstrations through the medium of the National Health Society. The League will try to lessen the amount of drunkenness in the country by trying to co-ordinate all the agencies at present at work for this purpose, by teaching children the evils of drink, by disseminating literature having the same object, and by providing clubs or other places of amusement from which intoxicants are excluded. They also trust that, by raising the standard of cookery throughout the country, they will lessen the craving for drink which badly-cooked and unappetising food has a tendency to excite.

They will also devote their efforts to the housing both of the working classes and of the poor by endeavouring to clear away slums and substituting for them good tenements at a moderate rent. In the country they will try to increase the house accommodation of labourers where it is at present deficient, and to improve it where it already exists. For this purpose they will try to enlist private enterprise, municipal authorities and legislative action.



