

IMMIGRATION AND MEDICAL INSPECTION.

Writing in the August number of the Public Health Journal, Dr. Charles A. Bailey, gives some useful pointers with regard to national health conservation as controlled by our immigration laws. Canada is guided by the experience of older nations and is benefitted accordingly. She is receiving today a better class of immigrants, taken in the aggregate, than the United States was receiving at relatively the same period in its development.

Dr. Bryce, head of the medical department of the Canadian Immigration service, has said that the approximate maximum of efficient work at the seaports under existing methods of inspection and the requirements of the act has been reached. But while this may be so, it is the case that despite all vigilance at the ports of disembarking a certain number of mentally and physically diseased persons slip through. To remedy this as far as possible it is proposed to organize on some reasonable and systematic basis the ship surgeon's services. He has opportunities of observation during the voyage which are unique. He has under his immediate supervision the immigrant for a period ranging from six to fourteen days, time enough to notice any peculiarities which may escape the necessarily rapid inspection at the port of destination.

The causes contributing to such failures as occur in the detection of unhealthy aliens are attributable to want of efficiency at the port of embarkation as well as to insufficient supervision exercised by the ship surgeon. Increased vigilance is necessary at these two points both from the point of view of ensuring a clean bill of health in all newcomers into the Dominion, and in justice to the immigrant himself. The latter should be stopped before he undertakes a fruitless journey, and the surgeon on board should be in a position to exercise stricter supervision than he at present does. The ship surgeons are often men who do not realize their responsibilities, occasionally men who are merely taking advantage of a cheap trip across the Atlantic, and for the most part are inadequately paid.

Dr. Bailey suggests that government medical officers with unlimited powers of supervision of food, accommodation and hospital facilities be detained in addition to the ship surgeon upon every ship carrying immigrants. Such officers in their daily routine would have exceptional opportunity for observation and detecting those minor defects which escape notice during inspection at the port of landing, but which are apt to develop afterwards. Whatever the steps to be adopted for more efficient medical inspection on shipboard may be, this is a question which is of prime importance, and should receive due consideration at the earliest opportunity.