

It is a face full of character, calm and untroubled, with eyes accustomed to perceive and reflect. His passing marks the end of an era. We in the College sympathize deeply with his widow and with his patients and friends. A memorial service is to be held on Wednesday, 23 April, at 11.30 a.m. at the Leeds University Church of St Emanuel.

CHILDREN GOING HUNGRY AT SCHOOL?

FOR some years there has been in this country a comfortable generalization that in children, at least, malnutrition means over-feeding—and indeed, various surveys have failed to uncover any significant degree of under-nourishment. A recent paper,¹ however, rightly causes a chill little breeze to ruffle this idyllic scene. In a small survey among working-class children in the East End of London, the author found some food for thought. Twenty-five per cent of children had no breakfast at the accepted time, and thus fasted from 6.30 p.m. until next midday; of the total number of children studied, 75 per cent had dinner at school, and of these nearly half habitually left certain foods which were almost invariably vegetables; a small number of children ate at cafés and their choice was in the realm of pie and mash or sausage and chips—some even buying only sweets or chips. Interesting facts about the evening meal at home also came to light. Only a third of the children had a main-course meal, while over half are recorded as having ‘tit-bits’, sandwiches or snacks—a few had nothing. The author equates this long fasting-interval with morning inefficiency at school—so often attributed to late television—and points out the great economic cost to the country of this inefficiency. He also infers a rather remarkable indifference in both teachers and parents to what their children eat.

Although this all adds up to a *prima facie* case for further study, certain questions arise from this article. Is it proven that a long fasting-interval is deleterious provided that the total daily intake is adequate? Would a school medical officer examining this sample find a higher incidence of ‘generally unsatisfactory’ children than is to be found in the school population at large? Does an abnormally-hungry child habitually leave a portion of his dinner—even the dreaded school cabbage? Some doubt, too, arises in the reader’s mind about tit-bits, sandwiches and snacks—the range here is from cocktail canapé to baked beans on toast; from the polite afternoon-tea wafer to the Ploughman’s Banquet of the public bar; from a Bath bun to Smorgesbord—but there is no ignoring those children who have no evening meal.

Posing these queries is meant in no way to detract from the importance of this paper, which may well be the cloud no bigger than a man’s hand which presages storms on the sea of complacency. The author is engaged in further investigations, and these will be awaited with interest, for we may yet find that parental ignorance and indifference in our affluent society have taken the place of the old poverty, and that public education on nutrition leaves much to be desired. It is certain that no doctor would like to see his own children existing on this sort of régime.

REFERENCE

1. Lynch, G. W. (1969). Food intake and the education of children. *Med. Offr.* **121**, 41.