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## EDITORIAL.

### WOUNDS OF THE MIND.

Those of us who remain at home in the peace and safety secured for us by our Navy and Army can only dimly guess the price at which these blessings are purchased. Day after day we read the roll of those who have died in action, and are in hospital suffering from wounds and disease, but there is another class of sufferers which this war has produced of whom we hear little, and yet of all those whom it has injured they most demand our sympathy and assistance, for wounds of the mind are more subtle and pitiful, and often more disastrous than those of the body, and no tenderness and care can be too great for this class of sufferers.

Often it is the bravest, the most highly strung, the most valuable officers and men whose minds are affected by shock and exposure, and the ghastly horrors of war.

To meet their need a Mental Treatment Bill has been introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Cecil Harmsworth, the memorandum to which points out that, as the law now stands nursing homes cannot, under the Lunacy Acts, receive for treatment patients who are suffering from nervous breakdown affecting their mental condition. Such patients can only obtain residential treatment if they are certified insane, and sent to an asylum or hospital under the Lunacy Acts. This applies even if the breakdown is of a temporary character, and almost certainly capable of being cured. It is well known that a sort of stigma attaches throughout life to a person who has once been certified as insane, and there is therefore great reluctance to have such cases certified, with the result that persons suffering from temporary mental disorder do not receive the special treatment in a nursing home which is suit-

able to their condition and calculated to effect a speedy cure.

The object of Mr. Harmsworth's Bill is to secure the proper treatment of such cases by making the law less rigid than at present. It will enable a man who in the service of his country has suffered a nervous breakdown to accept the treatment without being certified, for a period not exceeding six months, and under conditions which will provide security against misuse. It removes the necessity for formal certification in the case of persons suffering from mental breakdown of recent origin and arising from wounds, shock, &c., and in this respect assimilates the English law to that which has been in force in Scotland, and worked satisfactorily for fifty years.

It is provided that the Act shall continue in force during the continuance of the present war, and for a period of six months thereafter and no longer, except in respect of persons under treatment at the time.

At all times these borderland cases need the most delicate treatment, and we cannot imagine anything more calculated to unhinge the mind of a soldier or sailor, whose health has broken down under the stress engendered by the war, than that he should realize he is in an asylum certified as insane, and he has a right to protection from such a shock. Our lunacy laws are in urgent need of revision, as it is contrary to scientific teaching that a patient should have to be so certified before he can receive the special treatment he requires; for preventive and remedial treatment at the earliest possible stage of the illness are urgently required in order that the certifiable condition may be avoided. Mr. Harmsworth has therefore done great public service by introducing this Bill to which we regret to learn there is opposition, and that therefore it is very improbable it will pass into law.

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