

## The Cult of Health.

Among the encouraging aspects of our progress toward civilisation in the United States is the prominence and importance of the cult of health. There have been, within the last few years, a number of unrelated, wavelike curves of organisation for the scientific pursuit of national health, and within the past year many of these waves have been coming together and uniting their volumes for sustained effort.

Thus we have seen the rise of the American Health League, a vigorous, aggressive, and energetic body, which was chiefly the creation of Mr. Champe Andrews, the legal adviser of the New York County Medical Society, and a young man whose fresh zeal for humane purposes does not seem quite common in the law. Presently this League joined an affiliation under the general auspices of the Committee of One Hundred of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

In the list of organisations now working in harmony toward their beneficent purpose under the sign of science we find a Press Council, consisting of leading editors; an Authors' League, consisting of famous authors, who have pledged themselves to help in creating public sentiment in favour of better health conditions, both personal and public; a Press Writers' League; a Research Council, to consist of leading investigators, interested in original research along public health lines; a Finance Council (very important and necessary); and a Council on Co-operation, now in process of organisation, and which is to consist of America's leading officers of religious, fraternal, learned, secret, and educational organisations. In this last-mentioned Council, I hope our National Association of Nurses will be included. It should be, and no doubt it will.

So formidable an array of forces should go far to rout preventible disease. A bill for the Federal Congress is contemplated, and President Roosevelt has written to the Committee of One Hundred: "We cannot too strongly insist on the necessity of proper ideals for the family, for simple living, and for those habits and tastes which produce vigour and make men capable of strenuous service to their country." Again, in one of his speeches, he said, "I hope there will be legislation increasing the power of the national government to deal with certain matters concerning the health of our people everywhere; the Federal authorities, for instance, should join with all the State authorities in warring against the scourge of

tuberculosis. I hope to see the national Government stand abreast of the foremost State governments."

My own hope is, that the "Research Council" will look into the question of overwork and its relation to disease—more especially to tuberculosis. As yet, the general average of the well-to-do classes, though greatly enlightened about tuberculosis, and though greatly interested in the secondary relief movements for limiting and curing tuberculosis, such as day camps, sanatoria, and the like, have not as yet reached through to the primary industrial conditions which favour the development of this and of other protracted or chronic diseases. For instance, the relation between hours of work, for labouring people, and their health or disease, is not only widely ignored, but if brought up, often receives resentful denial. Thus, last winter, in a widespread and hard-fought strike of printers for shorter hours, though it was shown that a disproportionate number of printers suffer from tuberculosis, there was little or no general public sympathy with their movement. Yet such a campaign is a much more basic and primary health measure, and far more rational, than dispensaries and free milk for those who become ill through overwork.

Recently, however, the connection between overwork and ill-health has been recognised by the Federal Supreme Court, the highest in the land, in a welcome decision as to working hours for women. Several of our States have passed laws limiting their hours, and these are frequently contested by greedy or stupid employers on the ground that they deny "freedom of contract," and so disobey the Constitution of the United States. Such a case was not long ago carried to the Federal Supreme Court for final judgment, and, as our Courts have been giving many decisions lately that are unfavourable to labouring people, much anxiety has been felt, and the Consumers' League and other altruistic bodies have been working hard in collecting evidence, precedents, and facts for the support of restriction. To their immense relief, the decision was unanimous in favour of restriction, and was based upon the need of protecting the health of women and the well-being of the nation. But a queerly illogical break in the judicial mind was this; it was held that it was proper to restrict the working hours of women, even when it might not be so to limit men's hours. Now, if it is a health measure, how can one suppose that it is important for children to have healthy mothers, but that it is not im-

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