

venereal disease of the civil population is one of which English sanitary law should not take any special cognizance; he thought that there would be required for London the erection and maintenance of new hospital accommodation nearly equal to the general hospitals of London for all bodily diseases put together, namely, 3,000 patients; the cost of this alone was held to make State action impossible and unthinkable; the argument that the innocent undoubtedly suffer was met with the reply that to be the wife or child of a drunkard, or a gambler, involves evils against which the State does not affect to give security, and the dependent interest must be equally unprotected by the State against harms that other sort of looseness may bring upon it.

So far, then, have we travelled.

Incidentally it may be mentioned here how far our knowledge of disease has increased, for Sir John Simon stated that Gonorrhoea is never even temporarily of much importance to women, whereas we know it to be not only a chief cause of blindness, but also a very potent cause of sterility, and to be seriously reckoned with in connection with the declining birth-rate, which is one of the problems which a central Government Authority, taking a wide and comprehensive view of the health of the people, will find it necessary to face.

TUBERCULOSIS.

Still more striking is the growth of knowledge of the nature of tuberculosis, and the rapidity with which, within the last few years, measures of State medicine for dealing with this scourge have been brought into being. Powers and duties under the National Insurance Act, and by regulation of the Local Government Board, have been conferred upon Local Authorities, to make the most complete provision for the detection, the prevention, and the cure of the disease.

The National Insurance Act has not yet achieved all, or nearly all, of what was expected of it, but the beginning of progress in the treatment of tuberculosis is to be laid to its credit, and it has itself, of course, been a gigantic extension of State medicine, involving the reorganization of the medical treatment of the whole working population, raising the status of the general practitioner whose work lay amongst these classes, and bringing a large proportion of the medical profession into direct relation with the State as regards the bulk of their daily work.

SCHOOL MEDICAL SERVICE.

Ten years ago the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act brought into being a School

Medical Service, by which the children in the Elementary schools are regularly inspected by school doctors and school nurses, another vast extension of State Medicine, this time under the Board of Education as the Central Authority, and administered locally by education authorities. This has proved a powerful means of improvement of the condition of the population.

School Treatment Centres have sprung into being, dealing with the treatment of eye conditions, defective vision, throat and ear disease, and skin disease, amongst children. Dental inspectors have been introduced into the school, and school dental treatment centres have been established. Here is again a large extension of State arrangements for treatment.

School nurses, deriving added powers from the Children's Act, have produced a vast improvement in the cleanliness of the children; their devoted, unflinching, steady educational pressure being revealed by the improving figures year by year, even in war time, when the chances of infection are multiplied a thousandfold by the close proximity of the higger-mugger life of trench and camp to the homes of the people.

THE MENTALLY DEFECTIVE ACT.

Another great extension of State medical activity has arisen through the passing three years ago of the Mentally Defective Act. This has added to the care of the State the whole of that moiety of the population lying between the idiot and the imbecile and the merely backward. New officials have been appointed, both for the ascertainment and for the supervision of this most important and long-neglected class. A new Central Authority was brought into being—the Board of Control—to deal with this work, and this body absorbed the Lunacy Commissioners.

Together with the attention of the State, forcibly directed by the war to the occurrence of shell shock in thousands of soldiers, a term which covers a multitude of nervous disorders, the care of the mentally defective forces upon the notice of the State the importance of Eugenics.

Again, the war has stimulated interest in the care of the newly born child, of expectant mothers, and of children under school age, and a great number of maternity and child welfare centres, schools for mothers, crèches, and so forth have been established, largely by voluntary bodies, but handsomely subsidized by two Government Departments, which have vied with one another in distributing their largesse to various types of these institutions.

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