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**EDITORIAL.**

**"TAUGHT TO BE BLIND."**

Of all the tragedies of the present war there is none greater than the blindness which has bereft a number of our sailors and soldiers of their sight, and the report of the Departmental Committee on the Welfare of the Blind, just issued, is of special interest.

The terms of reference of the Committee were "To consider the present condition of the blind in the United Kingdom, and the means available for (a) their industrial or professional training, and (b) their assistance, and to make recommendations."

The Committee, whose Chairman was the Right Honourable W. Hayes Fisher, M.P., held thirty-eight meetings and examined fifty-three witnesses, and it is satisfactory that, at the conclusion of their labours, they state that they "want to impress upon the country the extremely hopeful nature of the problem; whereas in England and Wales one in 1,285 were reported as blind in 1901, the last census return shows this number to be reduced to one in 1,370."

In the section relating to Blinded Soldiers and Sailors the Committee report:—

"Since this Committee was appointed a new element has been introduced into the problem of the care of the blind. The blind community in this country has been increased by the accession of a large number of officers and men who have lost their sight in the war. We felt it to be clearly our duty to report specially on the condition of those who have made so tragic a sacrifice in the service of their country. It is generally known that practically all the blinded soldiers and sailors have been cared for at St. Dunstan's Hostel, Regent's Park, by the Blinded Soldiers and Sailors Care Committee.

"In the early stages of his disability, a

newly blinded man requires help and assistance in the simplest matters of everyday life, and great care is taken at St. Dunstan's to initiate him into the best method of re-adapting himself to his new conditions. He is, in fact, 'taught to be blind.'

"The actual re-education and training is divided into two sections—the class-room and the workshop. Working under the handicap of sudden blindness imposes a severe mental strain; the working day is therefore short, and it is found that the shortness of the working day is one of the chief reasons for the speed with which the men at St. Dunstan's acquire their knowledge and training."

Type-writing, cobbling, mat-making, basket-making, joinery, are all taught in the workshop, men are also instructed in poultry-keeping on practical and up-to-date lines.

Sir Arthur Pearson states that the men at St. Dunstan's acquire these industries in a very much shorter time than is usually supposed to be necessary to teach a blinded man a trade. He attributes this principally to the free employment of blind teachers. It is pointed out that the whole outlook of a man becomes different when he finds himself in the hands of a teacher who works under the same handicap as his own.

Massage training is conducted on the most modern and scientific principles. The men have to pass the examinations of the Incorporated Society of Trained Masseuses, the most severe in England. So far none have failed, and their subsequent work has won high commendation.

The most important Recommendation of the Committee is that a special department, whose function shall be the general care and supervision of the blind, shall be set up in the Ministry of Health, whenever such a Ministry is created, and in the meantime it should be set up in the Local Government Board.

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