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EDITORIAL.

A MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

Those of us who for years have been advocating a Ministry of Health feel that at last in spite of "pull devil pull baker," public feeling on this greatest of national questions is apparently to be taken into consideration. Prominent politicians at various meetings have during the recess been making National Health a plank of their policy, and we are informed that the Home Affairs Cabinet, under the presidency of Sir George Cave, has nearly completed the Bill for the establishment of a Ministry of Health. It is probable that it will be introduced into Parliament after the resumption of the House next week, but whether any progress will be made with it depends on the date of the dissolution.

If the General Election takes place next month—as is not only possible, but even probable—the Bill will be, next to the conduct of the war and the terms of peace, the principal item in the Coalition's election programme.

Dr. Addison, the Minister for Reconstruction, when addressing a meeting of medical men at the Steinway Hall, assembled to urge the election of representative medical men to the House of Commons, remarked:—

"The point on which the nation has made up its mind is that we require a Ministry of Health to undertake the whole responsibility for the promotion of the physical well-being of the nation. Among many other lessons, the war has taught us how much can be done in the prevention of sickness and injuries. Nothing has been so wonderful as the massing together of these myriads of men under the most trying conditions and yet without any serious outbreak of infectious diseases. We need this beneficent supervision in normal times

for the gradual improvement of the national health and physique."

"But what," asked Dr. Addison, "of the great army of the C₃ class at home? Is it possible to compute what these conditions represent to the men themselves, and to the nation in loss of energy, practicability, conduct, treasure and happiness? If we are to reap the fruits of a successful fight for freedom in secured peace and progress, we shall certainly need the best effort that we are capable of for production and useful life. But this army of C₃ men is the expression only in adult life of other armies coming onwards from the cradle. Questions affecting the home, workshop, school and its systems, personal habits, food, air, exercise, and many more, are involved.

"The Prime Minister told us the other day that we could not expect to run an A₁ empire on a C₃ population. We could not expect to get an A₁ population out of C₃ homes, habits, work places, or conditions. I suggest to you that your vision, experience, and responsibility, not as individuals only, but as an organised profession, extend to these things as they affect our public work, our laws and administrative efforts."

Mr. Hayes Fisher, the President of the Local Government Board, speaking on Public Health at Sheffield, was not too optimistic on the subject. He said we should be faced with a terrible shortage of doctors, nurses, and midwives—and especially we were likely to be short of well-trained physicians and surgeons for some years after the war. This was a problem that must be tackled.

Well! let us tackle it. If conditions are fair, the nurses and the midwives will not be wanting. Let us remember that thousands of women now employed in war work must find a new sphere for their energies when war ceases, and blessed Peace is ours once more.

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