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EDITORIAL.

A DANGER OF DEMOBILIZATION.

One of the dangers apprehended when demobilization takes place in the near future is the increase in venereal diseases, and none know better than trained nurses the ill-health and sorrow which these bring in their train, and no section of the community should, therefore, be more on the alert to assist in enforcing such preventive precautions as are indicated by expert knowledge and sanitary science.

In a letter to the press Lord Sydenham, the President and other officers of the National Council for Combatting Venereal Diseases, on its behalf, urge that unless strong measures are taken there will be grave danger to the public health.

It is understood, they say, that there will be about 300,000 men of the Army and Navy under treatment, and infective, on demobilization. The incidence of venereal disease in the Army where instruction, treatment and discipline combine to reduce infection, is put at only 2 per cent.; in the adult civilian population, where these influences do not obtain, it is estimated at nearly 20 per cent., and it is urged that immediate steps must be taken to prevent the spread of disease to wives, families and others.

The Committee ask the public to support the following plan of action.

That the Local Government Board should authorize the appointment of whole-time venereal officers (a man and a woman) on the staffs of the medical officer of each county or county borough. That the present hospital accommodation should be supplemented by *ad hoc* clinics under the supervision of such venereal officers in every town of 10,000 inhabitants, and also in the county boroughs. Such clinics to open for

continuous and early treatment both for men and women, and to be available early in the New Year.

Over a dozen other recommendations are made, amongst them the appointment of women police, and an adequate number of voluntary women patrols, but throughout these recommendations there is no word to suggest that the co-operation of trained nurses is desired, or that it is essential to success in the war against venereal diseases. Yet, when there was still a conspiracy of silence as to the ravages of these diseases the trained nurses were on the alert, and drawing attention to the necessity for dealing with their effects, instead of concealing and ignoring them.

Speaking in support of the Ministry of Health Bill, and its relations to problems of Reconstruction, at the Armitage Hall on Monday last, Dr. Saleeby stated that venereal disease had increased during the war, and said that "the real danger was the infection of hosts of healthy men who had fought for us, on their release, by exposure to the greatly extended area of infection among our young women at the present time." Better were it for our brave men that they should die on the field of honour, than infected and infectious drag out a miserable existence, and transmit a horrible disease to their wives and children.

Small wonder that nurses who know the misery entailed by even one case and its consequences, are appalled at the prospect of widespread infection, and desire to be effectively associated with any schemes for its prevention.

The work of nurses is not primarily to fight the disease on moral grounds, but certainly the moral side needs emphasising and such a campaign would have widespread support among nurses.

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