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EDITORIAL.

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH BILL.

We briefly referred last week to the Ministry of Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill presented by Dr. Addison, in the House of Commons, on August 16th. The Bill is one "to amend the law relating to the Housing of the People, Public Health, and Local Government, and for purposes connected therewith," and contains some very important provisions with regard to the supply and maintenance of hospitals, the regulation of the sale of clinical thermometers, the inspection of food and drugs, the medical inspection of aliens landing, or desiring to land, in the United Kingdom, and the provision of places for post-mortem examinations.

THE SUPPLY AND MAINTENANCE OF HOSPITALS.

In regard to the supply and maintenance of hospitals, Section II. of the Bill provides that (1) the council of a county shall have power—

(a) to supply and maintain hospitals (including out-patient departments) for the treatment of illnesses and diseases generally, or for the treatment of any particular illness or disease, or any particular class of illnesses or diseases; and

(b) To contribute, on such terms and conditions as may be approved by the Minister, to any voluntary hospitals or similar institutions within their area; and

(c) To undertake the maintenance of any poor law hospitals or infirmaries within their area; and

(d) To establish and maintain, or to contribute towards the cost of or otherwise aid in establishing or maintaining, an ambulance service for dealing with cases of accident or illness within their area.

It is also provided that the Councils of two or more counties may, with the consent of the

Minister, and subject to such conditions as he may prescribe, combine for the purposes of supplying and maintaining hospitals under this section, and that any councils so combining may appoint a joint committee under section eighty-one of the Local Government Act, 1888.

Provision is made to enable county councils to recover the cost of maintenance in hospital from persons in a position to pay, who have been treated in hospitals maintained by such councils.

THE SALE OF CLINICAL THERMOMETERS.

Section twelve of the Bill prohibits the sale in the United Kingdom of any clinical thermometer, unless it has been tested, approved and marked in accordance with regulations made by the Minister, under penalty of a fine not exceeding £10 for each conviction.

EXPENSES INCURRED BY MEMBERS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

Under section seventeen of the Bill provision is made to enable members of local authorities, or of any of their committees, to be re-imbursed for any expenses they may incur in travelling to and from any meetings of the authority or committee, and also for a subsistence allowance to any members attending such meetings, subject to regulations made by the Minister, and in accordance with a scale approved by him.

It is obvious that the effect of the provisions of the Bill, if it becomes law, as it is likely to do in the near future, will be of far-reaching importance.

The existence of a Central State Department under a Minister of the Crown specially charged with promoting the national health and actively engaged in so doing, must have a profound influence for good in this relation, and eventually raise the standard of national efficiency, prosperity, and happiness.

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