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**EDITORIAL.**

**IN THE FIRST RANK OF NATIONAL SERVICE.**

The Right Hon. Christopher Addison, M.P., P.C., Minister of Health, in an address delivered on February 12th, at the forty-third Annual Meeting of the Torquay Branch of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute, spoke of the work of the Institute as being in the first rank of National Service, an expression of opinion which all who know anything of the work of Queen's Nurses will cordially endorse. The Institute, said Dr. Addison, set an excellent example in good, daily, needful and efficient work at an inexpensive cost. The problems of the present day called for determination, self-denial, foresight and patience, and they were struggling to improve the health of the nation at a time when everything is more costly and more difficult than ever.

Dr. Addison then spoke of the Maternity and Child Welfare Services of the country generally, giving some interesting details.

There are, he said, at the present time, throughout the country, 1,900 maternity and child welfare centres, which form the rallying point of the whole scheme of the Service.

Then there are 3,560 trained health visitors, and the Minister of Health expressed his gratification that 2,300 of these were trained nurses.

It is calculated to make the most careless amongst us think, to learn that there are in the elementary schools to-day no less than 1,000,000 children suffering from disabilities which might have been prevented—children partially blind, partially deaf, or suffering from nasal obstruction. Dr. Addison went on to say that between 1911 and December 31st, 1920, £64,000,000 had been paid out under the National Insurance Scheme in sickness and dis-

ability benefit. If the disabilities he had mentioned had not been acquired in childhood some £10,000,000 of this sum would not have been called for.

The Ministry of Health has made a special investigation of the work for mothers and infants throughout the country, as a result of which schemes have been developed for improving the training and position of health visitors, midwives and nurses. The result of these efforts are apparent. Dr. Addison states that in the last twenty years of the last century the death rate of infants during their first year of life was 148 per thousand of the population. In the first decade of the present century it was 128 per thousand; from 1910 to 1920 it averaged 108; and last year it was 80. The Minister expressed the view that the rate should not be higher than 50.

Referring to the cost of the Maternity and Child Welfare work, Dr. Addison said that it was rather less than one-fifth of a penny in the £ of the Budget, and not a penny on the rates. He challenged anyone to find a branch of the national expenditure which in the last two years had only cost this amount that had produced a like result.

We agree with Dr. Addison that a return to the conditions of the first decade of the present century, with an average infant mortality of 128, would be a waste of life, happiness and effort which no sane economist could justify, and we look forward to the time when, as the manifold health agencies of the country, both remedial and preventive, are co-ordinated under the aegis of the Ministry of Health—a policy indicated in Dr. Addison's Address to the Central Poor Law Conference on Tuesday last—the waste of life will still further decrease, and the standard of health, and therefore of wage-earning capacity, will be materially raised.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)