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EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

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EDITORIAL.

THE STATE OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

The Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health (Sir George Newman) for the year 1923 on the work of the Medical Department, has just been issued, and is published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, price 3s. net. As usual, it contains a vast amount of information on the state of the public health—information so expert, so important, so condensed, that the Report should be procured and studied by all those who wish to acquaint themselves with public health matters.

Sir George Newman points out that, in addition to deaths from notifiable infectious diseases (which, excluding tuberculosis, are responsible for, perhaps, 10 per cent. of the mortality), there is a wide prevalence of ill-health in the community due to general sickness, invalidity, and physical impairment, which, in bulk, provides the chief burden of disease and disablement. The physical defects of infancy and childhood, discovered in infant welfare centres by means of the School Medical Service, and in children's hospitals, the causes of rejection of recruits to the military services, the absence and loss or broken time in industry, the end results revealed in hospitals, asylums, and other institutions, the findings of medical practice under the Insurance Act, constitute a great burden of disease which incapacitates and cripples to a serious extent, and yet finds no place in notification or death returns. It is largely unmeasured and unregistered, and yet it is *the principal cause of physical inefficiency*. Much of it lays the foundation of mortal disease, much of it is preventable; and all of it constitutes a part, perhaps the main part, of the health problem of the nation.

The Report points out that Great Britain's public health obligations in regard to infectious diseases are imperial and international, as well as local. Some diseases, such as plague, malaria, typhus, are, in this country, almost entirely "exotic," cholera, yellow fever and leprosy long ago became exclusively so. At the present time, none of the last group of diseases is a menace to health in England, but it is still as necessary as ever to be on the watch with regard to their prevalence throughout the world, and to continue uninterruptedly the public health measures to which our freedom from them is due. We must continue to take our part in the world campaign against them, and particularly we must co-operate with Dominions and

Colonies, and fulfil our sanitary agreements with other nations in regard to them.

Under the heading of the Poor Law Medical Service, Sir George Newman deals with Poor Law Training Schools for Nurses, and states that considerable attention was devoted in 1923 to the arrangements available in Poor Law Infirmaries for the training of nurses. In this the influence of the Nurses' Registration Act is apparent. We read:—

"When the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, became effective, the General Nursing Council framed rules for the registration of existing nurses and of intermediate nurses (*i.e.*, those in process of training), and for these two classes accepted the certificates given by these Training Schools as affording the evidence of adequate knowledge and experience required from applicants for admission to the general part of the Nurses' Register. Nurses, however, who desire to be registered, and who have not completed three years' training before July, 1925, will have to pass the examinations of the General Nursing Council, and cannot enter for these examinations unless they submit evidence that they have undergone at least three years' training in Institutions approved for the purpose by the Nursing Council. In order that nurses training in Poor Law Institutions may proceed, if they so desire, to the examinations of the Nursing Council, it became necessary for the various Training Schools to be approved by the Nursing Council. In order to assist Guardians, the work of each School has been reviewed by officers of the Ministry, and necessary improvements suggested. The various factors taken into consideration have included the variety and quantity of clinical material, the equipment of the sick wards and operating theatres, the arrangements made for lectures and practical teaching lecture-room equipment, the sufficiency of the trained staff, and many other details. This review of existing arrangements has tended to raise the standard of teaching at many of the institutions and has resulted in many desirable improvements.

"All the recognised Poor Law Training Schools have sought formal approval by the Nursing Council."

So far, the 26 London Training Schools have been approved for complete training, and, in all, over 100 Poor Law Infirmaries are providing their nurses with instruction and training adapted to the Examination Syllabus of the General Nursing Council.

This is one most satisfactory result of the passing of the Nurses' Registration Act.

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