

## THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

### AN IMPORTANT CIRCULAR.

An important circular has been issued from the Ministry of Health to the Local Authorities in England and Wales on the subject of the need of houses for the poorer members of the working classes in which it is stated in part:

"I am directed by the Minister of Health to state that, in consultation with the associations representing the local authorities principally concerned, he has had under consideration the administration of the Acts relating to the housing of the working classes. The critical period through which the country is now passing and the present financial circumstances make it imperative that all new expenditure on housing should be used to the greatest possible advantage.

"It is generally admitted that the outstanding need at the present time is for the building of houses which can be let at rents within the means of the poorer members of the working classes. The Departmental Committee on the Rent Restriction Acts, whose terms of reference led necessarily to a general review of housing conditions, show clearly in their report that, in spite of the immense volume and cost of house building since the War, the needs of the poorer workers are not in fact being adequately met. The evidence available in the reports of medical officers of health and of the Minister's officers leads to the same conclusion.

"The Minister has therefore suggested to the associations whom he has consulted that local authorities should concentrate their efforts on the provision of a type of house which can be built at a low cost and can be let at a rent within the means of the more poorly paid workers. The type of house which he has in mind is the three-bedroomed non-parlour house of about 760 square feet, which experience has shown gives adequate accommodation for the ordinary family with children. Houses of this type can, with due regard to economy in layout of land and construction of roads and sewers, be built in most parts of the country at an inclusive cost which will allow the rents to be fixed at 10s. a week (inclusive of rates) or less. The Minister is glad to be able to state that the associations have concurred in his suggestions and have expressed their desire to work in the closest co-operation with him in the matter. He asks all local authorities to limit their new building proposals in accordance with the suggestions which he has made, and he thinks that it would be an advantage if they would submit their proposals in a preliminary form, with a statement of the facts on which their estimate of need is based, before adopting definite plans and specifications."

There is no more important national question before the country at the present time than that of housing, which is fundamental.

### CONTROL OF LIFE.

At the annual meeting of the Science Masters' Association held recently at the Imperial College of Science, Mr. Jocelyn Field Thorpe, F.R.S., Professor of Organic Chemistry, Imperial College of Science, gave an entrancing address on the new vista which organic chemistry was opening up, and its bearing on good health and long life, concerning which he said that the vastness of the field of research staggered the imagination.

He said that on the biochemical side organic chemistry presented great possibilities of future development which would have been regarded as incredible 25 years ago. Already it had become evident that the processes of life were controlled by the presence of definite organic compounds. Some of these were produced in the body; others were introduced into the body through the food we ate, but all were essential to health and life. Indeed it

could be prophesied that sometime in the future ill-health and disease would be eliminated by the readjustment of the impaired bodily function through the administration of the required organic substance in the correct quantity. Here was a field of research, the vastness of which staggered the imagination, because each substance would have to be isolated and its constitution determined, and it would then have to be synthesized. The substances of this type already recognised were firstly the hormones which were secreted by the glands and employed to fulfil their functions as the body required them. The most important of these were adrenaline, the active principle of the supra-renal gland; insulin obtained from the pancreas; and thyroxine, the principle of the thyroid gland. These compounds were definite organic substances, all of which exercised some special purpose in the body.

The second type of organic compound which had been found to be essential to the performance of certain bodily functions were, Professor Thorpe said, the vitamins, and the work done on these substances during the past few years showed that, like the hormones, they were definite organic substances. There was reason to suppose that in the near future their constitutions would be determined, and when this was done their synthetic preparation would undoubtedly follow.

### DISEASES CAUSED THROUGH NEGLECT OF NOSE.

Dr. Octavia Lewin, Vice-President of the Women Public Health Officers' Association speaking at the Winter School for Health Visitors and School Nurses at Bedford College for Women impressed upon her audience that one of the first lessons to be learnt by all mothers who wished their children to grow up healthy and strong was that every baby should be given its own handkerchief. All sorts of diseases were caused through neglect of the nose. She strongly deplored the habit of thumb-sucking in children and denounced tight collars, which, she said, were extremely dangerous to health. It was always amazing to her that hospital nurses, who ought to know better, wore stiff, high, tight collars, and when they became matrons they added to these tight bonnet strings.

We agree with Dr. Lewin that stiff high tight collars are out of place, and should be abolished. What she means by the tight bonnet strings worn by Matrons is somewhat obscure. Very few Matrons in these days wear bonnets, but we presume Dr. Lewin is referring to the becoming cap strings which many wear, and which are usually made of soft muslin and are not worn unduly tight.

### AN INTERESTING AND IMPORTANT DECISION.

A blood test was used to decide a paternity case in the Dublin Circuit Court recently, when Michael Bruen, farmer, appealed against an affiliation order obtained in the District Court by Christina McGovern, of Mohill. The appeal was allowed. A State pathologist, three doctors, and legal representatives of both sides were present at the blood test. The Judge, in giving judgment, said the decision of the District Justice could not be supported.

Considering the difficulty in deciding such cases the decision is a very important one.

### AMENITIES OF MALAYAN LEPER SETTLEMENTS.

It is mentioned in the Annual Report of the Federated Malay States Medical Department that the inmates of the Leper Settlements at Kuala Lumpur are, for a large number, happily occupied in the vegetable gardens and pig farms. There are five shops managed by lepers, and the school has about seventy pupils in charge of a leper schoolmaster. All social entertainments are greatly appreciated. A cinema projector has been installed, and open air entertainments are given fortnightly. Also, there are several Leper dramatic societies, which occasionally give performances.

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