

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**

EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 2030. Vol. 85.

SEPTEMBER, 1937.

Price Sevenpence.

## EDITORIAL

### THE HEALTH OF THE NATION.

The National Health is now engaging the serious attention of responsible Ministers of the Crown. As will be seen, in another column, the Minister of Health is embarking on an organised campaign to be carried out through the coming months with the object of raising the standard of National Health, systematically, and intensively, and its importance is emphasised by the fact that the Prime Minister has elected that the first speech he will broadcast since his appointment to the high office of First Minister of the Crown shall be in support of this campaign at a Reception at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, which will be attended by Lord Mayors, Mayors, civic heads of County Councils, County Borough Councils, and other Welfare and Education Authorities throughout the country. This effort is one which will have the support of all people of good will, for it is vital to the prosperity, the happiness, and maybe the very existence of the Nation. By none will it be welcomed more warmly than by Registered Nurses, for none are more alive to the suffering, both mental and physical, which are caused by impaired health resulting from unhygienic conditions of living. The condition is one which is many-sided, and thus must be attacked from many angles. Primarily there is the question of eugenics—the right of every child brought into the world to be well born. Well we know how far we are from attaining that ideal. Every day children are born undersized, undernourished, handicapped for the battle of life from the start, and some, alas, tainted with hereditary disease, including the venereal diseases. Surely we cannot rest content till these diseases are wholly eradicated, and not a child of this nation comes into the world with such a heritage of woe.

But lest we be thought to be painting too gloomy a picture, we will here direct attention to our review of the Report of the Minister of Health on page 242 of this issue, from which it will be realised that the work of the Ministry has borne fruit, and that there has been a notable decrease not only in the venereal diseases, but in many other communicable diseases. Indeed, as we pass up and down the streets of London we cannot fail to be struck with the healthy and well-cared-for appearance of the majority of our children, a condition for which not only the devoted work of highly-skilled nurses of the L.C.C. School Nursing Service are largely responsible, but also the mothers of the children, who are now better educated than formerly in periculture, must have their share of praise. But still there is much work to be done before we can be satisfied that nurses and eugenists have attained the highest standard possible in

regard to the health of the rising generation upon which so much depends.

Assuming that owing to the increased care of mothers with child a fair proportion of children are born healthy, we come next to the problem of keeping them so. At present the supervision of the child from the age of one year when he passes from the care of the infant welfare centres, to the time when at the age of five he comes under the supervision of the School Medical and Nursing Authorities, needs strengthening. In these critical years ailments and defects which could have been dealt with effectively if brought early under medical supervision frequently develop, and may even become permanent defects for lack of medical attention. The "measures in hand to extend the child welfare and school medical services upwards and downwards respectively by providing better attention for children too young to attend school, and so improve their health still further are intended to close this gap in the existing facilities," and, during the present year proposals have been before Parliament for closing another gap, that between the School Medical Service and entry into the health insurance scheme at the age of 16.

Another question of vital importance to the national health is the housing question, and in regard to this the Ministry of Health has shown that it is on the alert, so that during the year under review there has been a special survey of nearly ten million houses to ascertain the extent of statutory "overcrowding," while new building is proceeding apace.

Speaking recently during an official visit to the representatives of the Welsh Local Authorities at Cardiff, the Minister of Health said that the problem of nutrition must increasingly occupy the attention of the Nation, and the basis of our nutrition policy would be further extended by making provision to enable milk to be made safer, and by extending its supply further to mothers and children. Above all, in our immediate health policy we must adopt a more positive policy in the matter of the national health. We must not only ensure safeguards against disease, but actively promote good health.

Surely it may be hoped that with the combined action of the Ministry of Health, of doctors, nurses, midwives, and sanitary and civic authorities, and a greater understanding on the part of the public of the importance of fresh air and sunshine, nutritious and well-cooked food, and adequate housing, a new era is dawning in which the health of the Nation as a whole will be brought to and maintained at a higher level than ever before. To attain this none will work more devotedly than the profession of Nursing, whose members are so cognisant of the needless suffering and ill-health which result from unhygienic conditions.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)