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EDITORIAL.

OUR NEW MINISTER OF HEALTH.

It would appear quite appropriate that the Minister of Health should be a member of the medical profession, and we feel sure that Registered Nurses as a whole will welcome Mr. Walter Elliot, M.C., M.P., who has succeeded Sir Kingsley Wood in this important Ministry, especially as he was a sympathetic supporter of their demand for State Registration in 1919 when the Nurses' Registration Acts were placed upon the Statute Book. We may hope, therefore, for the future that Nursing Legislation if considered by Parliament will receive intelligent and progressive consideration, and that Registered Nurses will not be legislated for without their consent, and indeed in opposition to their convictions, as has been done by ignorant politicians in the recent past, and of which the Midwives Act, 1936, is an example.

HOSPITAL CO-OPERATION.

Mr. Walter Elliot fulfilled his first public engagement since his appointment as Minister of Health when he attended the annual conference dinner of the British Hospitals' Association, where he expressed the opinion that the State, the local authorities, and the voluntary hospitals had one common aim—namely, to bring together all the resources of the nation to the cure of sickness and the promotion of good health and a better way of life, and he believed that co-operation between these three partners would always continue.

ADVANCE IN MENTAL TREATMENT.

The Minister of Health, in opening the new Admission Hospital and Convalescent Units which have been provided by the Kent County Council at the Kent County Mental Hospital at Maidstone, said that the extensions brought the Institution into line with the most modern hospitals by providing those special facilities for new and early cases which is such a significant feature of latest developments in mental treatment.

Mr. Elliot congratulated those responsible for their desire to give the mental health service its proper place in the health services of the country and for the rapid development in the county of out-patient clinics with which the new units would work in close touch.

The fact that the new Admission Hospital included a special unit for the overhaul and improvement of physical condition reflected the inter-relation of mental and physical conditions and Mr. Elliot emphasised that improvement in physical condition was usually followed by improvement in mental condition and might lead to complete recovery.

The very name "mental institution" showed the change which had taken place in recent years in the

attitude towards mental illness which we rightly look upon to-day as an illness like any other. Even now there was far too much gloom about mental illness in the minds of some of the public, and it could not be emphasised too much that about one-third of the patients admitted to mental institutions to-day were discharged as recovered. This rate was about the same as the apparent recovery rate among notified cases of pneumonia.

He was glad to know that the patients themselves were increasingly realising that no stigma attached to mental illness, since last year nearly a third of the admissions to mental hospitals were voluntary patients. This was a notable advance and an application of the principles of preventive medicine.

Those who were mentally disturbed needed all our tender care for the time, just in the same way as pneumonia cases needed good nursing. And we might be nurturing genius. For instance, Charles Lamb was temporarily unhinged in 1795, but he quickly got over that trouble, and more than 20 years later he embarked on those delightful gems of literature, "The Essays of Elia." Lamb's troubles deepened his understanding and sympathy; in literary criticism his was a new departure, for he tried to understand and interpret the mind and life of the writer and the poet and did not spend himself on learned disquisitions about variant readings of the text.

"HOME FRONT" EFFORT.

Speaking at Bristol, the Minister of Health said that his own Department was one of the "home front" ministries which were not less important to the nation than the Ministries of Defence.

The nation's great effort in the field of rearmament was on the side of material. Our great effort in social service was its counterpart on the side of personnel.

To put three and a half inches on to the height of the school child, to add a stone to his or her weight, was to recreate a stronger and more vigorous race, which was now emerging again after the impact of the Industrial Revolution.

It was not in one field but in all fields that we had to meet the challenge of the new century, of which the dictatorships were only a symptom.

HOUSING OF THE PEOPLE.

Mr. Elliot, in paying a tribute to the progressive character of the housing plans of the Wandsworth Borough Council, said it was not sufficient to have great University buildings and fine public buildings; they should be accompanied by adequate housing of the people.

With all these opinions expressed by our new Minister of Health we heartily agree.

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