

time being their honourable services are not affected. They specially deplore the fact that the Nurses Act has been hurriedly thrust through in the absence of thousands of colleagues on duty with the wounded abroad.

The British College of Nurses, Ltd., emphasised this point in its letter to the Prime Minister on April 1st.

Now let us realise how differently the medical profession is being approached by the Minister of Health in promoting his inclusive Medical Service in a National Health Scheme. No private drafting of a Bill without its knowledge or consent—*pas si bête*. And we note whilst letters from Registered Nurses protesting against demoralising legislation are rigorously excluded by the Press, ample space can be found in *The Times* for the opinions of medical Peers. Thus on the principle of altering professional medical standards in the absence of members of the profession at the front—the protests of medical men find publicity.

To quote from *The Times*, Sir Ernest Graham-Little writes: "The men who will be asked to work any scheme of universal free medical service are the great body of general practitioners. No adequate opportunity for this section of the profession, either at home or abroad, to express its opinion has been afforded. There may be, as you say 'No reason to suppose that the views of doctors serving abroad will differ from those of doctors at home,' but we have as yet no information as to what views of either really are."

Lord Dawson of Penn, speaking at Liverpool, when advocating the means whereby citizens could secure to themselves health, and when stricken with illness the best means of cure and restoration. "Such planning," he said, "must be gradual in its journey to completeness in order to build upon and not destroy existing foundations, which were good. . . The service we hoped for could not evolve without the profession having a responsible share in the foundation and guidance of its policy."

How different is the policy of my Lord Horder when dealing with the nursing and the medical professions. The de-grading of the former in the midst of war has dealt us a deadly blow (for the time being). In a letter to *The Times* he writes: "This haste to transfer the doctors and the voluntary hospitals of the nation to the somewhat jejune care of local authorities as at present constituted seems almost indecent. In the matter of the medical profession precipitate and wholesale action for the mere sake of action may easily be regretted. We may move our doctors up the hill only to find ourselves later following the historic example of a certain gallant general, and moving them down again."

Quite so! Let us hope the Registered Nurses will give Lord Horder a helping hand when his gamps come tumbling down the slippery slope.

#### TERRITORIAL ARMY NURSING SERVICE BENEVOLENT FUND.

The Annual General Meeting of the above Fund will be held in Room 115, 39, Hyde Park Gate, London, S.W.7, on Monday, May 24th, 1943, at 2.30 p.m.

## MENTAL HYGIENE.

Philosophers and law-makers in the most ancient times were not unaware of the importance of mental hygiene; this, like physical hygiene, is closely bound up with ethics and the art of education.

The relationship between body and mind was not unknown. Plato and Galenus wrote on this subject, and, before them, the Indians and Democritus tell of cures brought about by music. All the people of the ancient world—and, in America, the Quiché of Guatemala—practised psychotherapy.

The expression "mental hygiene" appeared for the first time in a book by William Sweetser, published in New York in 1843. However, the present movement, which has led to the creation in every country of mental hygiene clinics, as well as to the present progress in our knowledge and methods, received its impetus from the publication in 1908 of a book by Clifford W. Beers, entitled "A Mind that Found Itself." The author of the book, who is not a doctor, tells how he was kept in confinement for three years, when suffering from a mental illness, and how, after his recovery, he decided to devote himself to the task of improving the lot of the mentally deficient, and, above all, of preventing mental disorders. A similar task was undertaken by two celebrated psychiatrists, Auguste Forel, in Switzerland, and Edouard Toulouse, in France.

Mental hygiene concerns itself with the intellectually backward, the abnormal, those who show early symptoms of mental disorders and those who still need guidance and help after discharge from mental institutions.

The backward or mentally deficient are those persons born with reduced intellectual capacities. They are the victims of heredity, disease, drunkenness; or else, their state is due to accidents suffered by their parents, or, sometimes, to injuries received at birth or in early childhood. The capacities which they possess can be developed to a certain degree by careful treatment and special training. These mentally deficient persons should not become parents in their turn.

Abnormal persons owe their condition to heredity, to disease, to accidents, or else to faulty upbringing, such as excessive severity or indulgence, or alternate severity and indulgence. Mental hygiene dispensaries and Child Guidance Clinics are very successful in handling cases of this kind. But this task calls for a great deal of skill and experience, untiring patience and co-operation between the parents, the specialist, and the nurse especially trained in mental health work. By such methods it has been possible to cure children who refused to eat, who were unmanageable, rebellious, lazy; to cure young people who had run away or whose bad behaviour was the despair of their families.

Mental troubles can often be arrested in the early stages of their development, and persons discharged from mental hospitals can frequently be completely cured and rehabilitated. This is another example of the successful work of mental hygiene institutions.

In order to set up such institutions, very highly trained and thoroughly competent staff are required. Doctors and nurses must work in collaboration with all those who are likely to help them in their task, such as the clergy.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)