

SERVICE MEN AND TUBERCULOSIS.

We are glad to note that *The Times* is devoting space to the nursing question as it affects tuberculosis.

A letter published recently from Dr. H. M. C. Macaulay, County Medical Officer of Middlesex, concerning the treatment of tuberculous Servicemen removes certain misunderstandings which exist.

Dr. Macaulay writes:—

"The natural sympathy we all feel for the Serviceman and our desire to do all that is possible for him has focused attention, however, upon the very grave shortage of facilities which exist for the institutional treatment of the tuberculous. The difficulty, however, is not one of red tape, which can be cut, nor is it one of beds, of which large numbers exist. In this connection, the ready co-operation of the Ministry of Health in 1941 and 1942 made available to my Council some 450 E.M.S. beds for the treatment of tuberculosis. The problem is one of staff, both nursing and domestic.

"Middlesex County Council possesses, as part of its institutional provision for the tuberculous, two large, modern, well-equipped sanatoria, containing over 1,000 beds. Of these, 150 have recently had to be closed for lack of nursing and, more particularly, of domestic staff, and more will need to be closed in the near future for the same reason. If nurses and domestic workers were forthcoming, these beds and several hundreds of others in Middlesex could be opened and patients admitted within a matter of weeks. One of the tragedies of the present position is that the closure of sanatorium beds coincides with a longer waiting list for institutional treatment than has ever been experienced in this county, entailing a waiting period of four to six months for many before admission. As is known, there has been some small increase in tuberculosis during the war years; moreover, the campaign of miniature mass radiography in active progress in this county is bringing to light an appreciable number of early cases, whose prospects of recovery are excellent if they can be promptly placed under treatment.

"The question of staff shortage needs emphasis, because under existing conditions it is a matter over which local authorities have very little control, beyond ensuring that working conditions are as favourable as possible and paying reasonable salaries and wages. All this my Council has done, but the shortage remains unrelieved and, indeed, appears to be getting worse.

"The whole fabric of the anti-tuberculosis scheme is threatening to collapse through lack of staff. While fully appreciating the many difficulties in connection with woman-power which still confront those in authority, one cannot help feeling that if the same will were present to divert women into this vital service as succeeded in mobilising them for other essential war work, the problem of the institutional treatment of the ex-Serviceman and the civilian would be on the way to solution."

We invite the Medical Officers of Health to realise and instruct the Minister of Health that the shortage of efficient nurses will continue so long as highly-skilled and intelligent women are classed with quacks as they are on the Assistant Nurses Roll compiled by the

Minister of Health under the notoriously unjust Nurses Act, 1943.

Let Medical Officers of Health demand legislative justice for Registered Nurses, and we believe they will respond to the call of the tuberculous service more.

NEW CAMPAIGN AGAINST DIPHTHERIA.

More children have been killed by diphtheria during the war than by bombs. The total number of children under 15 in England and Wales who lost their lives as a result of air-raids is 8,000. Nearly 9,000 died from diphtheria.

This is in spite of the fact that since the National Campaign for Immunisation against Diphtheria started, the annual total of deaths has been reduced year by year.

More than 5,000,000 children have been immunised, but 3,000,000 remain unprotected. The Ministry of Health is therefore launching a new Summer Campaign, in which doctors, pharmacists, nurses, teachers and health visitors will co-operate by urging parents to take advantage of this safeguard. Three hundred local authorities have already informed the Ministry that they are organising special publicity campaigns in their areas, using Press advertisements, posters, leaflets and cinema slides to support personal explanation and persuasion.

A Ministry Official said to-day: "For every three children who died from diphtheria before the campaign started in 1942, only one is dying to-day. But in order to maintain this improvement, and entirely defeat diphtheria as an epidemic disease, at least 75 per cent. of all children under 15 must be immunised.

"Diphtheria is most dangerous to children under five. The main aim of this year's campaign is to get at least half a million babies protected before they reach their first birthday."

"BREAD AND MARG."

The following sympathetic nurses have most kindly sent us gifts for the Sister whose diet, in the "Home" where she has to reside, consists of "bread and marge" and vegetable soup: Miss D. Wile £1 5s., Miss A. M. Wood £1 1s., Miss G. Vergette £1 1s., Miss L. M. Mill £1, "Coat-bridge" £1, Miss E. S. Herring 10s., Miss M. Gwatkin 10s., Miss Mary Harvey 10s., Miss P. Oakley Williams 8s., Miss S. J. Munro 5s. Mrs. H. F. Fletcher 5s.—a helpful gift of £7 15s.

A letter bearing the Rhyl postmark intimated that 10s. was enclosed, but there was no remittance in the envelope.

Miss M. Gwatkin also sent a box containing 1 tin ox-tail soup, 1 tin meat soup, 1 tin drinking chocolate, 1 packet chocolate spread, 1 tin sardines; a very practical gift.

We return sincere thanks for the generosity of these ladies, and hope they may realise how very grateful the recipient is.

THE PASSING BELL.

We regret to announce the death of Miss E. Gibson, A.R.R.C., on Sunday, June 24th, 1945, in Edinburgh.

Miss Gibson joined the Q.A.I.M.N.S., February, 1914, retiring in December, 1934. During this war she has held the post of Matron at Castle Craig Auxiliary Hospital, West. Linton, Peeblesshire.

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