

The Minister has expressed the thanks of the Government for this generous action, the news of which was announced on May 30th, Sir Thomas' 79th birthday.

Cairndhu, which was built by Lady Dixon's father, stands in well-timbered grounds on the County Antrim Coast Road, and commands a magnificent view of the coast line and sea. It contains 60 rooms, and can be easily adapted for hospital purposes.

Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon have always taken a keen personal interest in hospitals and other philanthropic institutions.

SURVEY OF THE PREVALENCE OF SICKNESS.

Sir Wilson Jameson, chief medical officer of the Ministry of Health, in his foreword to the first published report* of the Survey of Sickness, says that the Survey provides "basic information of great value in adjusting the health services to the needs of the community and in assaying the progress of our work."

Until recently, the only illnesses of which there were definite figures were the compulsorily notifiable diseases (smallpox, scarlet fever, and so on), and illnesses which proved fatal. There were, of course, also the National Insurance records covering a part of the population, and dealing with illness causing incapacity for four or more days. But there was no nation-wide measurement of the amount of general illness, nor of the incapacity resulting from it.

To supply the Ministry of Health with much-needed information on these matters the Government's Social Survey organisation, which undertakes various investigations for Government departments, has during the last three years been conducting a continuous survey of the prevalence of sickness. The method used is that of the "sampling enquiry." It is based on the principle that the examination of a relatively small sample of people can provide information about the condition of the population as a whole. The public has become familiar with this "sampling" method of enquiry through various opinion surveys, and its application to social problems is now generally accepted.

The first experimental health Survey in January, 1944, was followed by a further seven during that year, and from February, 1945, onwards there has been a regular monthly Survey, providing a continuous record of rates of illness and consequent disability. About 3,000 people are selected every month—each time in a different set of districts. The names of these people are chosen at random, so that the sample may represent the whole population as closely as possible. The trained investigators of the Social Survey call on the selected people and ask them certain questions about their health during the past few months. Questions are asked also about age, housing conditions, occupation and income. The reason for these questions is that it is important to find out not only the amount of illness at different times and in different parts of the country, but what kinds of illness are most common among people of certain ages, occupations and income groups, and in certain kinds of houses.

Voluntary and Confidential.

When the replies have been collected they are "pooled" and analysed by medical statisticians, and reports are drawn up. No names appear in the reports.

*The Report is not on sale, but a copy may be seen by arrangement with Mr. L. Moss, director, Social Survey, 39-41, Notting-ham Place, W.1. (WELbeck 8536.)

The Survey is entirely on a voluntary basis—there is, of course, no compulsion on anyone to give the information asked for. Experience so far shows that the public response to the enquiry has been excellent. Out of more than 81,000 people interviewed up to December, 1946, only about $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.—that is, one in 200—have declined to take part in the Survey. The Ministry of Health is grateful to all who help in this enquiry. The information they give is made available to the medical profession and to administrators responsible for measures to maintain and improve the nation's health, and is of very great assistance.

From the monthly Survey it becomes possible to measure fluctuations in the nature and frequency of ailments and injuries in relation to such factors as sex, age, region and living conditions. Information is made available about degrees of incapacity, the amount of medical attention received, and many other important matters. The results of the Survey, taken over a period of time, provide a check by which progress can be assessed.

Here are a few of the many facts which the Survey has brought to light:—

The annual loss of men's work through illness is about 230 million man-days.

In 1945, one out of five people had a cold in January, one out of 20 in July.

Women complain of about 25 per cent. more minor ailments than men. For defined illness of a more serious nature there is little difference between the sexes.

The amount of new illness does not increase as age advances.

The rate at which people consulted their doctors in 1944 averaged about six attendances per head of the civilian population over the age of 15.

Data resulting from the Survey will be made available regularly in the near future in the published quarterly returns of the Registrar-General, and from time to time the Social Survey will publish progress reports.

APPOINTMENTS.

MATRON.

Star and Garter Home for Disabled Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen, Richmond, Surrey.—Miss Margaret E. Eaton, S.R.N., S.C.M., has been appointed Matron. She was trained at the West London Hospital, Hammersmith, where she was later Staff Nurse and Sister. Miss Eaton has also held posts as Sister-in-charge, Male Accident Ward, Royal Hants. County Hospital, Winchester; Sister (temporary), Private Wards, Dorset County Hospital, Dorchester; Night Sister at the Royal West Sussex County Hospital, Chichester; Sister-in-charge, Maternity and Children's Ward, Dorset County Hospital; Sister-in-charge, Male Accident Ward, Royal Infirmary Worcester. Miss Eaton served in the Territorial Army Nursing Service from 1940-1946 as Sister, in Iceland, England and India, and as Assistant Matron, Principal Matron and Matron. Miss Eaton is at present on the administrative staff of the Royal Infirmary, Worcester.

Dr. Stevens Hospital, Dublin.—Miss M. J. Carey, S.R.N., S.C.M., has been appointed Matron. Trained at Royal Hospital, Salford, Royal Maternity Hospital, Glasgow. Previous appointments, Assistant Matron, Night Sister, Royal Hospital, Salford; Night Sister, St. Andrew's Hospital, Dollis Hill, London; Ward Sister, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)