

of their forces, and to continue their beneficent activities against the horrors of peace, which, in the aggregate, are even more serious to mankind than those of war.

The statement that the devastations produced by disease in times of peace are even greater than the loss of life from war, may be illustrated by the experience of England and Wales. In the four years, 1911-14, immediately preceding the world war, 2,036,466 persons died in England and Wales, while, according to official figures, the total loss of men during the four and one-quarter years of war was 835,743, including 161,800 presumed dead. The war figures give the entire loss for the British Empire; but it cannot be far from the truth to state that war on the gigantic scale of the war from which we have just emerged has killed in Great Britain about one-third as many as have died in the civilian population in a corresponding period. I do not lose sight of the fact that a large proportion of the civilian deaths occur in ripe old age, and that 28 per cent. of the total civilian deaths occur among the children under 5, while those destroyed by war are adults and the most virile of our race. But the greater part of the deaths in childhood, as well as in adult life, before old age is reached, are preventible; and in the future will be prevented, given adequate research, intelligent and unsparing application of knowledge already in our possession, and an avoidance of the public parsimony which in relation to public health constitutes the most serious form of extravagance. That is the ideal which Mr. Davison and his collaborators place before us; and it was to devise plans to this end and to enlist the continued co-operation of all Red Cross workers that the conference was called at Cannes.

The Conference held a number of general meetings in which the general policy to be pursued was discussed, and then divided itself into sections dealing with the following subjects: preventive medicine, child welfare, tuberculosis, malaria, venereal diseases, nursing, information and statistics. These sections were not selected as covering the entire ground of preventive medicine, but as forming branches of work in which early investigation and action appeared to be most desirable.

But first of all the lines of general policy were discussed.

It is evident that although measures for the prevention of disease constitute a definite governmental function—neglect of which is treason to the communal welfare—even in the most advanced countries our governing bodies have not lived up to their potentialities. In scarcely a single sphere of its work can it be said of any government or of any local authority, that what could be done to prevent disease and to avoid human suffering has been completely accomplished. To say this is merely to express the imperfections of humanity, singly or the greater