

## Annotations.

### MATERNITY CHARITIES.

Mrs. Heywood Johnstone, Bignor Park, Pulborough, the chairman of a committee formed for the purpose of ascertaining "how far the proper provision for the attendance of women in childbirth is adequate throughout the country, with a view to some plan of organised assistance if necessary," is, amongst other information, trying to find out what assistance is given in the parishes throughout England and Wales by maternity charities, either towards the payment of a doctor or the supply of a midwife, and is appealing through the Press to all clergy and others who are able to inform her (1) if in their parish such a charity exists; (2) what form of help it gives; and (3) if there is any association or institution for the supply of midwives to the poor or nurses to work under the doctors; (4) what number of entirely untrained women there are who work without any supervision.

The Committee are desirous of obtaining this information, as they believe that the gradual abolition of the untrained midwife will be the result of the passage of the Midwives' Act this year. It should undoubtedly be possible for every woman in childbirth to obtain the skilled assistance of a member of her own sex, and we hope that the days of the untrained midwife, like those of the untrained nurse, are numbered. But if this Committee contemplates some comprehensive scheme of organisation we hope it will bear in mind that the ideal at which to aim is not to place an independent midwife in every parish, but rather a trained nurse, who who is a qualified midwife, and who will work under medical direction.

### MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO.

The sad suicide of the assistant-superintendent of nurses at a large provincial Poor Law infirmary points to the need for sound health on the part of all who are engaged in the care of the sick. Not only is the physical work of a nurse arduous, but the mental strain consequent upon the responsibilities involved is very great, and a well-balanced mind is one of the first essentials in all women who adopt the profession of nursing. It is also important that symptoms of overstrain should be noted in nurses who as a rule have good health, and a rest be insisted upon. If taken in time, such a rest will save many a permanent breakdown. As a rule, the occur-

rence of fits of depression and periods of excitability in a person ordinarily of equable temperament; sleeplessness, and loss of memory are warnings which should not be neglected, and, although we are far from wishing nurses to be hypochondriacal, and constantly observing their own symptoms, such indications should be reported to the authorities without delay, and medical advice as to the desirability of taking a rest obtained. Such a course is essential in the interest of all concerned—of the nurse herself, of the patients for whom she cares (for any disturbance of her mental poise will react unfavourably upon them), and, lastly, of the institution which she serves.

### A HOSPITAL TAX.

It may not be generally known that an impost is levied upon all vessels trading to Canada at the rate of 3d. per register ton per annum. In consideration of this payment free hospital treatment is given to all seamen, in hospitals maintained out of the revenue. This would seem to be a fair provision; it is alleged, however, that the tax has become somewhat onerous upon steamers engaged in the St. Lawrence trade, and communications have recently passed between Liverpool shipowners and the Colonial Office with regard to the Canadian Hospital Tax. The point of view of the shipowners is that the majority of liners carry a doctor and have hospital accommodation on board, and that the shore institutions are therefore seldom utilised; and the liners derive little or no benefit; also that the increased size of steamers in recent years has doubled or trebled the amount originally paid, and it is stated that last year's figures show a balance of £5,163 3s. 11d. in favour of the Government.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that no liners so far carry trained nurses and that the complement of modern treatment is modern nursing, without which the best results of treatment cannot be attained; secondly, that in most liners all the best space available is utilised for the accommodation of passengers, and the hospital arrangements are, as a rule, very inadequate; and, thirdly, that a ship is far too noisy for it to be an ideal or even a desirable place in which to be ill. An alternative to the payment of the tax would be to pay a fixed sum per week for every case sent into hospital. This should meet the needs of all concerned.

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