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Editorial.

BABIES' CLUBS.

An interesting experiment in connection with the infant mortality problem is the Babies' Club in Belfast, which was recently opened by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

The Lord Mayor who presided at the opening ceremony said that when the Belfast Branch of the Women's National Health Association was formed, one of the health problems put forward for its consideration was infantile mortality, and how to combat the causes leading to it. The Infantile Mortality Sub-Committee had established the Babies' Club, the first of the kind organised in Ireland, as a means of solving the problem. The Chairman of the Committee is Lady Byers, and amongst the members are Lady Hermione Blackwood and Mrs. Robert Campbell, late Matron of Queen Street Children's Hospital and Hon. Superintendent of the Shankill and Falls District.

Mrs. Campbell described the work of the Sub Committee which is carried on in direct co-operation with Dr. Bailie the Medical Officer of Health, and is confined mostly to the children of dispensary patients, though the Committee is also invited to take charge of children through other channels. The system adopted is that the public health lady visitor first visits the babies, and official cards are then sent to the District Lady Superintendent of the Babies' Club, and are apportioned out through her amongst the lady visitors for the district. Each child is visited once a week for the first four weeks, and afterwards once a month, a post-card containing details of its condition and development being subsequently sent to the Lady

Superintendent. When a child is found to be in a poor condition from lack of proper nutriment, the society supplies milk guaranteed to be non-tuberculous and of the best quality, a special fund having been raised for this purpose.

It is very satisfactory to know that the Club has proved so successful that a new branch has already been opened in Mount-pottinger, and Mrs. Baker, Hon. Lady Superintendent of the new district, reports favourably as to its working.

Professor Sir John Byers, who conveyed to the Lord Lieutenant the thanks of the Infant Mortality Committee for the signal honour he had paid them in coming to Belfast with the sole object of formally opening the first Babies' Club established in Ireland—in which were combined the best features of the pioneer French institutions—said that the Committee by co-operation with municipal and other organisations was endeavouring to solve, in a poor and crowded neighbourhood, one of the most pressing problems of the time, how to avert the holocaust of infants in the first twelve months of their existence. The Committee endeavoured to educate the mothers in the sublime duties of motherhood and, to this end, got into touch with them and with their children at as early a period as possible.

We congratulate the city of Belfast on being first in Ireland to inaugurate so important a movement for the national welfare.

The public is now beginning to realise that the children in a civilised country have their rights as members of the community as well as their parents, and that it is the duty of that community to see that these are accorded to them.

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