

The Midwife.

THE BABY CLINIC.

The sufferings of little children and their alleviation—this really was the theme of Dr. Anne L. Kann's address on "The Work of the Baby Clinic" at a drawing room meeting held at 25, Cavendish Square, W., on Friday, October 25th, on the invitation of Lady Horsley. As most of our readers know, the Baby Clinic, located at 12, Telford Road, North Kensington, is the memorial of the Women's Labour League to two noble women, the late Mrs. Ramsay Macdonald and Mrs. Middleton, whose hearts were full of sympathy for these suffering little ones, and to whom it forms a peculiarly appropriate memorial.

The Baby Clinic is in no sense a crèche, but is designed to afford an opportunity for medical advice for the ailments, serious and trivial (but which may become serious if not treated in time), to which babyhood is subject. To effect this end, the Clinic is located in a poor neighbourhood, a mile and a half from the nearest hospital, and Dr. Kann and Dr. Ethel Bentham attend on regular days. A mother therefore knows when to find the doctor who has seen and treated her baby before, and thus understands its constitution in a way which is impossible when the child is taken to a different hospital—or, if to the same hospital, is almost certainly seen by a different doctor—on each occasion.

It is pathetic to learn that the ailments of the babies—for the Clinic is essentially for babies from a few days up to five years of age—are nearly all the diseases of malnutrition; that the need of most of the children is more and better food. Rickets is very prevalent, teeth very defective, enlarged tonsils and adenoids frequent, and the usual eye and ear troubles, and the skin eruptions so frequent amongst ill-nourished children are common.

It is a pitiful record, and the record of North Kensington is without doubt repeated in that of other Metropolitan Boroughs and provincial towns. But in North Kensington at least, at the Clinic, skilled medical aid is freely at the disposal of suffering babyhood, and the nurse in charge gives daily care to these suffering mites, who need the most careful observation, because they are so tiny that they cannot make their troubles known, and the food-medicines, such as cod liver oil and malt, administered by her accelerate the recoveries of the little ones in a way which is impossible in connection with the out-patient departments of hospitals, where this daily watchful care is out of the question.

No one realises better than nurses and midwives the amount of preventable suffering of little children, and therefore they should aid the good

work by every means in their power. Those working in the localities by directing the attention of poor mothers to the advantages of the Clinic, and others by bringing its needs to the notice of those who are able to help it financially.

Mrs. Hylton Dale, who presided at the meeting last Friday, said that if any of those present visited the Clinic they would be so touched and moved by all they saw that life would never be quite the same again. The Clinic could not get on without—"I know the word you think I am going to use," said Mrs. Dale—"money—but I am not going to mention it just now. The Clinic cannot get on without *love*—love in action, which proceeds from the Divine. That love is in all hearts and can be stirred up."

The Clinic was a memorial to two women who did splendid work inspired by love. Confucius said that all disease was ignorance of law. The 119th Psalm was an illustration of the law of God—the law of love. Probably most of us had at one time or another lain awake at night troubled by the world's problems. Then some influence enveloped one, an influence she believed to be an emanation from the Divine Spirit, and one became composed and went to sleep. But in the morning the sense of that emanation was still present, and one pondered, "What can I *do* to help?" One wanted a lead. Meetings such as the present afforded such a lead. One might open a Clinic, or support a going concern such as that in Telford Road, and so help the very poor children of the neighbourhood. She then called on Dr. Anne L. Kann to address the meeting.

Dr. Kann invited her hearers to picture themselves walking down Ladbroke Grove, and then turning off the main thoroughfare into Telford Road. The Baby Clinic did not differ much from the other houses except that the shop window was painted green to render the glass opaque. There was a little door for doctors and tradespeople, and there was also a romantic door through which the little patients and their mothers pass in and out.

The speaker then enumerated the various forms of medical assistance available for the children of the locality. A private doctor might be called in at a cost of 1s. 6d. a visit. That probably represented the expenditure on meat for the whole family for the week, for they usually only had it once, and that was a serious matter. Or they could go to the dispensary of a neighbouring doctor where they paid 1d. per month sick or well, and 6d. a bottle for medicine when ill. Or the child could be taken to an Infirmary, but in that case there were various formalities to be gone through, and if the baby became ill after 4 o'clock it must wait till 10 the next morning before the relieving officer could be applied to for an admission order, unless the child was really dying when

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