

QUEEN MARY'S MATERNITY HOME.

Wednesday, October 12th, was a day of great and far-reaching importance in Hampstead, for the Queen, accompanied by Princess Mary, visited the Borough for the purpose of laying the foundation-stone of Queen Mary's Maternity Home, the special function of which will be not only to serve the district in which it is placed, but to act as a model for Public Health and other authorities in the establishment of similar Homes.

The ceremony took place in a marquee, the stone, ready to be lowered to its place, and draped on each side with the Union Jack, forming the background of the platform.

Her Majesty, on her arrival, was received by Lady Bertha Dawkins, Chairman of the Executive Committee, Sir Alfred Mond, Bart., M.P., Minister of Health, and officials of his Department, the Earl of Onslow, the Bishop of Willesden, Alderman Fraser Mayor of Hampstead, Miss Wishart, Matron of the Home, and others.

The invited guests were mainly representative of Public Health Authorities and Infant Welfare Workers, and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick represented the General Nursing Council for England and Wales.

LADY BERTHA DAWKINS made a charming opening speech which might well serve as a model to chairmen on similar occasions. Simple, direct, informative, and amusing, it was delivered with a clearness of diction which enabled it to be heard without effort by all present, and in the happiest vein, generating amongst the audience an atmosphere of geniality and goodwill.

She said that it was felt an honour to all, especially to the Committee, that Her Majesty should come to lay the foundation stone of the new Home, which would be national in character, and, it was hoped, would serve as a model to others concerned with child welfare work. It was founded by Her Majesty with the balance of the money which she had in hand at the end of the war in connection with Queen Mary's Needlework Guild, and Princess Mary had allowed the surplus of her Sailors' and Soldiers' Fund to be used for the purpose. The Committee were indebted to Lord Leverhulme for the site, and for the use of Cedar Lawn as a temporary Home. Queen Mary's Needlework Guild had continued its interest, and had contributed over £6,000 to the establishment of the Home, besides clothing all the babies. The endowments they had received for beds (£175 per bed) sounded like a page of romantic geography. These came, amongst others, from Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, New Jersey, Yokohama, Bangkok, Santiago, Buluwayo, the Federated Malay States, several of the South American Republics, and from Mrs. Arthur James. Five hundred and twelve babies, including ten sets of twins, had been born in the Home at Cedar Lawn in two years, and they had lost no mothers and no babies, except one mother from a cause unconnected with childbirth.

She concluded by reading a letter from a father, an ex-Army Service man, who wrote of the bitterness occasioned by the apparent apathy as to the welfare of ex-Service men and said that such Homes as Cedar Lawn would do much to eliminate that bitterness.

SIR GEORGE NEWMAN, K.C.B., M.D., Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health, by command of the Queen, then briefly explained the origin of the Maternity Home which Her Majesty had founded, and which was now in course of erection. The money contributed to Queen Mary's Needlework Guild was originally collected for the benefit of men serving with His Majesty's Forces, and the Queen decided that as it was no longer required for its primary purpose it should be devoted to the permanent advantage of the families of these men and their successors.

Her Majesty had always been keenly interested in the health and welfare of women and children, and especially in the development of organised assistance on behalf of motherhood and infancy. It was within the Queen's knowledge that in the United Kingdom upwards of 4,000 women die every year in childbirth, and that many of these deaths might be prevented if proper facilities for treatment were available. Moreover, these deaths showed a tendency to increase rather than to diminish, and it was an unfortunate fact that the conditions which proved fatal in some cases caused prolonged illness in a much larger number of others, not infrequently resulting in permanent ill-health and invalidity. Her Majesty strongly held the view that no woman should suffer from lack of skilled attendance at the birth of her child, and considered that one of the most urgent problems of maternity and infant welfare was the establishment of a fully efficient Maternity Service, of which the maternity home should be the true centre between the practitioners of midwifery on the one hand and the maternity hospital on the other.

It was the hope of the Queen that the establishment of the Maternity Home at Hampstead would demonstrate her desire to see improved facilities provided, and represent a personal contribution to the solution of this great problem as well as offering direct practical encouragement to local authorities and other bodies or persons in a position to provide homes of this kind. The Queen did not wish the permanent home to be a large or pretentious hospital, but a simple and homely institution, primarily for the benefit of mothers whose babies could not safely be born in their own houses. It would contain fifteen to seventeen maternity beds, as well as accommodation for the healthy children of patients who could make no other arrangements for their little ones during the period of residence in the Home. While providing everything requisite for the efficient treatment and for the comfort of patients and staff, there would be no unnecessary luxury or extravagance.

Her Majesty trusted that the Home of which she was laying the foundation stone that day, as well as others in different parts of the country, would prove invaluable to medical practitioners

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