

The Midwife.

Maternity Clubs.

Miss Helen Klaassen, in her paper on Maternity Clubs, read before the recent Conference of Nurses and Midwives, drew attention to the low state of public opinion with regard to provision for the needs of a woman at the time of her confinement. She urged the necessity for the education of mothers in thrift, and for improved methods of helping women at these times.

She gave some account of the Wakefield Babies' Welcome, and of the work which has been done from St. George's and St. Thomas's Hospitals. In a more recent experiment, tried in some South London parishes, an attempt has been made to get women to join a Provident Maternity Club five, six, or seven months before the expected date of confinement. A visit is paid to the expectant mother with the object of getting her to think out for herself what her coming needs will be. The aim is not only to help the woman to estimate the cost of her needs and to arrange for the collection of regular fragments sufficient to provide for all that is wanted, but to encourage thrift and foresight in a much deeper sense. The woman's personal hygiene, the securing of reliable attendance, the engagement of her professional attendant in good time, the making of sensible baby clothes are all matters as important as the putting by of savings, and require an equal amount of forethought.

Below is a copy of a Parish Provident Maternity Club member's card:—

PROVIDENT MATERNITY CLUB.

Members to be married women, living in the Parish of St. _____.

Members should join the Club seven months (or at least six months) before the expected date of confinement. All provision should be completed one month before that date.

The table below should be filled in, and arrangements will be made for payments to be collected each week.

	£	s.	d.
Doctor			
Midwife			
Attendant			
Baby clothes, etc.			
Extra nourishment.....			
	£		

.....Weekly payments atper week
 The money (excepting that for baby clothes, etc.)

cannot be withdrawn until the time of the confinement, or of the member's removal from the parish.

When the money is needed, a post-card should be sent to the Secretary, who will call and arrange for the repayment. Repayment can be made in one sum, or in weekly instalments.

Hon Secretary

The relief of maternity cases is also dealt with by these Parish Clubs.

If the Secretary of the Club finds a woman unable to put by for all that is necessary for a satisfactory time of lying in, she reports the circumstances to the Maternity Club Committee, who may then, at their discretion, admit the woman as a member of the Club, if she agrees to put by according to the scale thought suitable by the Committee. In such a case, if the member fulfils her agreement, the Club will see that the woman has all that is necessary at the time of confinement.

If any woman who has planned for a satisfactory time of lying in and has made her payments regularly, suffers unexpected misfortune before her confinement, it is always found possible to obtain help for her through local charitable relief agencies.

In the discussion which followed the paper, much interest was shown in the chronically poor, the unthrifty and disreputable. In reply, the reader of the paper pointed out that help at the time of confinement is only one out of many needs of the chronically poor. Some people think that mothers need food when nursing, others that school-children need food, others even that unemployed men seeking work need food. It was her opinion that all people require food at all times; women certainly require food before the confinement, as well as after. Dealing with chronic poverty is a matter for the State, which we hope will reform its poor laws at an early date.

Attention was drawn to the anomaly in the action of many Guardians who provide a doctor for midwifery cases, whereas the class above that which falls upon their help, employs the less expensive midwife. The provision of a doctor only, for persons who cannot afford to pay a nurse is not, in Miss Klaassen's opinion, adequate. An ex-parish doctor (Dr. Bygott) said he was glad to hear this point raised, as he had had great difficulty in connection with maternity cases. He only got over his difficulties by taking his wife with him when he attended parish cases, so that she could act as nurse.

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