

## The Midwife.

### BABIES' WELCOMES IN THE WEST RIDING.

BY MACK CALL.

Fortunately for the coming generation, "baby cult" is becoming fashionable in the West Riding. In the past probably as many infants were sacrificed to ignorance or handicapped for life in the dirty, black, manufacturing towns of Yorkshire as anywhere else in England. The work among the babies is done largely on preventive lines, and the mothers are always taken into account in this fight for a healthy nation.

In each town different methods are adopted, but all have the same end in view, viz., to educate the mothers, and in the meantime watch over and prescribe the infant's environment.

In Sheffield the work is done by the Medical Officer of Health's Department, assisted by honorary workers. Any woman who wishes for advice can bring her baby to the weekly consultations, although the consultations are intended specially for babies who are being fed on dried milk.

Each baby is weighed and examined by a Doctor, and afterwards the mother can buy for a low figure the amount of dried milk prescribed by the Doctor.

In Sheffield over a hundred babies can be seen in one afternoon. In a large outer room the mothers undress the babies and roll them in flannel wrappers kept for the purpose. After the visit to the Doctor's consulting-room the baby is dressed and taken home.

The Infant Consultation at Sheffield—with its score of nude babies all in revolt—resembles a very noisy out-door department of a hospital.

At Leeds the work among the babies is done on more homely lines. The meeting places for the mothers are called Babies' Welcomes; there are five in the town, and the Lady Superintendent attends at the Central Welcome each morning and welcomes any mother who comes to her for advice.

Once a week a Doctor attends at each Welcome to see any baby that has not gained in weight, or that is not quite normal.

Advice is given on artificial feeding, but the aim of the Leeds Babies' Welcome is to encourage all mothers to breast feed. Sometimes a poor mother is allowed dried milk or other nourishment for herself, in order that she may nurse her infant.

Homely talks are given to the mothers over a cup of tea. Sometimes the Superintendent demonstrates the preparing of a bottle or a meal for older children, bathing a baby, or dressing an infant.

At Leeds there is an afternoon each week for expectant mothers. Here they are taught to make suitable clothes for the coming baby, to take care of their own health, and to save a few pence weekly towards the extra expense of their lying-in. The members of the Leeds Babies' Welcomes are taught to consider the Welcomes as places specially designed to make them happy, and to look upon the Medical Officers, the Staff, and the Visitors as their very good friends. The Committee would like to extend the work so as to be able to provide cheap and nourishing meals for the mothers, both expectant and real, but they are handicapped by the lack of funds.

The first Babies' Welcome in Leeds was opened in 1909, and during its first year 400 babies were enrolled.

Wakefield is fortunate in having a health visitor who has for years pegged away at the idea of a School for Mothers. The work among the babies was first started by this pioneer worker; it has now been adopted by the Medical Officer of Health and his assistants. Expectant mothers are visited in a friendly way both by lady sanitary Inspectors and voluntary workers. All are invited to join a Club, and their savings are collected weekly. At their confinement they have their money back, and, if they wish, they can borrow from the Club mackintoshes and bedding. In Wakefield babies are visited until they are twelve months of age. In Leeds the Welcome workers try to keep an eye on the babies until they reach two years.

About a year ago, with rather a flourish of trumpets, Bradford joined the ranks of the Baby Protectors. The movement originated with two young men who dreamt dreams and saw visions. It was the vision of a healthy, happy nation that inspired the first Babies' Welcome. The mothers have taken kindly to the Welcome. The Medical Profession and the churches are its supporters; but, after little more than a year's work, the constant complaint is, "We have no funds, and our hands are tied."

There are other means in Yorkshire of reducing the Infant Mortality, but we have only

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