

# The Midwife.

## The National Insurance Bill.

During the Committee stage of the National Insurance Bill on Monday, some important changes were made, notably that in reference to the maternity benefit.

Sick pay is to be given from the fourth day of illness, not from the fourth day after notice of illness is given.

Sickness benefit of 7s. 6d. a week for four weeks, in addition to the maternity benefit, is to be given to the insured wives of insured husbands.

Reduced sick pay will be given to boy and girl workers.

The second change notified is of great importance, affecting married women who, as wage earners, will be insured under the Act. They will receive in the first instance the maternity benefit of 30s. paid not in cash, but in attendance and drugs, etc., and, in addition, 7s. 6d. a week in cash for four weeks. It is only fair that if a wage earning woman is debarred by the Act from earning money for four weeks, that she should receive a cash payment.

It is not proposed by the Government to extend this double benefit to unmarried mothers, and an amendment, moved by Mr. Keir Hardie, and supported by Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, Mr. Walter McLaren, and Mr. Lansbury, to extend the concession of double sick pay to unmarried mothers, was lost.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in voicing the Government view, said that it was because of their dependents that the concession had been made to married women, and it was very rare for an unmarried woman to have dependents. Also, an unmarried woman had a legal remedy, which covered her maternity expenses.

The amount to be paid to a mother under the Maternity Benefit appears to us in justice to depend on her contribution to the scheme, and not on her moral character. The Bill is a financial not a philanthropic one. The argument advanced by Mr. Lloyd George that an unmarried woman has a legal remedy, which covers her maternity expenses is thus unsound.

A point which arises in connection with this Insurance Bill is the position of the Maternity Hospitals, and maternity wards in infirmaries and workhouses. Most maternity patients at all times prefer to remain at home for their confinements, and if they receive the means to do so under the Bill it is fairly certain that the number of in-patients in Maternity Hospitals will be materially decreased. How this will affect medical education, and the training of midwives remains to be seen, but it would certainly appear that the Bill will have far-reaching consequences in this and other respects, which were not apparent to its framers.

## Gastro-Intestinal Hæmorrhage in a New-born Infant.

Mr. H. F. Semple, M.R.C.S., records an interesting case of gastro-intestinal hæmorrhage (melena neonatorum) in the *British Medical Journal*. The hæmorrhage came on thirty-six hours after birth; the labour was normal (second confinement), and not unduly delayed—there was no interference. The parents were healthy. After birth the child took the breast well, but thirty-six hours afterwards began to vomit bright blood, and also pass blood and clots very frequently from the bowel. It became very blanched with very cold extremities, and appeared to be dying of collapse. Brandy was rubbed on the gums. She was kept quiet and warm, and gradually revived. In twelve hours she was sleeping comfortably, her colour was better, and she began to take the breast again; the motions after twenty-four hours were again normal, and without any trace of blood, and vomiting had not recurred. The interest of this case is chiefly in the rarity of the disease, and in the recovery of the child, the mortality in these cases being about 60 per cent. What was particularly remarkable was the enormous quantity of blood passed (fifteen cloths saturated) and the quick recovery after such a loss. There were no symptoms of ulcer of stomach, or duodenum, before or after the hæmorrhage, and it was too sudden for capillary oozing. One must attribute the cause to embolism of the umbilical vein near the liver, extending into its branches for some distance (Landau). There was no evidence that the blood came from the mother's breast; there was no jaundice.

## Society of Infant Consultations.

A General Meeting of the Society was held on Thursday, July 13th, at the Marylebone Dispensary, 77, Welbeck Street, at 5 p.m.

Dr. Eric Pritchard explained that the object of the meeting was to ascertain the opinion of members with regard to the proposed scheme of amalgamation with the Department of Schools for Mothers of the National League for Physical Education and Improvement. The new organisation would be called the Association of Infant Consultations and Schools for Mothers, and would have a much wider field of usefulness than under the present conditions. The secretarial duties would in future be carried on by the permanent staff of the League.

The new scheme, which was proposed by Dr. Langmead, and seconded by Miss FitzGerald, was unanimously adopted by the meeting.

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