

assistance is at best a sorry substitute for the honourable extra wage which the community pays for the work of all men, *in case one day they may have a family to support*; but, at present, the Poor Law is the chief widespread aid at hand for poor British mothers in their months of helplessness; and it should be made as efficacious and as little galling as possible.

While Englishmen, in the maternity clauses of the Insurance Bill, have just commenced timidly to approach this vital problem, Frenchmen—more imaginative, more really practical, more far-sighted—have been at work for years on a composite scheme for the protection of maternity. The ever-dwindling birth-rate in France has made it most urgent to save as far as possible the new-born lives. Possibly, Englishmen cannot forget the teeming birth-rate of half-a-century ago; but ominous signs are not wanting that in a generation England will have to face the problem of self-annihilation, which so disturbs patriotic Frenchmen to-day.

The French scheme to assist maternity consists of a series of 'Secours' (aids), partly municipal, partly private, all carefully organised and financed to work together smoothly. The various 'Secours,' which supplement each other, and do not overlap, are very instructive and interesting, because both humanity and common sense rule in their administration. They are broadly divided into three series: (1) Relief for self-supporting expectant mothers; this is really an excellent scheme of maternity insurance. (2) Skilled attendance for any necessitous or overburdened woman (of any class) at the time of her child's birth. (3) Relief for the poor nursing mother, either free or in the nature of insurance. Originally all, or nearly all, the free 'Secours' were intended for deserted girl-mothers, but they have been thrown open to equally necessitous widows and deserted wives. An admirable feature of relief for maternity throughout France is the utter absence of any inquisitorial questions as to antecedents. The presence or absence of a wedding-ring is ignored. Here is a perishing mother to be succoured; here is her endangered offspring to be preserved. Those two patent facts are quite sufficient.

All countries supply a necessitous mother with more or less adequate assistance in her time of direst need; but it is not of much national advantage to care for mother and infant at the time of birth, if the woman has previously been exhausted by starvation and over-work, or if for the succeeding months the enfeebled and hampered woman and her young infant are left alone to shift as best they may. In Paris and the provinces, there are many institutions which invite the expectant mother to cease work for from four to eight weeks before her confinement, according to her condition. In Paris, there are several working-homes ('Asiles-Ouvroirs'), like that of the Rue Saint Jacques, also maternal refuges attached to certain private and municipal dispensaries and hospitals, where women can be received for rest both before and after confinement. The entertainment in the

Asiles-Ouvroirs is quite free, but more privacy in some places can be secured for a nominal payment. It is astonishing how the physique of a starving expectant mother improves at these homes. The Asiles-Ouvroirs provide light work for the resting women, who receive the pay they have earned when they leave the home.

No compulsion is used to bring the women into resting-homes. The Frenchman, with his real common sense, has turned no legislation against the expectant mother, such as exists in England, Switzerland, Denmark (Switzerland only imposes a fortnight, Denmark a week, of compulsory idleness before confinement). He considers it a barbarity to forbid a solitary woman to work, until the State sees its way to recompense her for weeks of enforced idleness, which, possibly, mean permanent unemployment in the future.

A valuable part of the municipal aid to expectant mothers is the free 'consultations,' which advise an ignorant working girl on the management of her health, and supply her, if necessary, with food, medicines, &c. These consultations are well patronised by factory and other work-girls; and can be attended at the various hospitals, dispensaries, &c. The Assistance Publique grants yearly, for the succour, in their own homes, of very poor expectant mothers (married or single) a sum of 100,000 francs (£4,000)."

We advise our readers to procure and read in its entirety this most interesting article.

INFANT MORTALITY.

The public work of Dr. Helen MacMurchy, of Toronto, Canada, is well-known on this side of the Atlantic, and her third report, on infant mortality, addressed to the Hon. W. J. Hanna, Provincial Secretary, and printed by order of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, will be received with the respect it deserves.

Introducing the subject, Dr. MacMurchy quoted the opinion of some of the great daily papers in the Dominion of Canada. Thus the *Ottawa Free Press* says, "Governments in this country spend hundreds of thousands to teach the farmer how to raise colts and calves and pigs. Not a dollar is spent to teach the mother how to rear her young. The light seems to be breaking, however, and it is to be hoped that the Ontario Government will initiate steps to carry out the recommendations of its investigator," and the *Peterborough Examiner* says, "Herein is raised a more important question than reciprocity or tariffs. These have to do with our pockets, but the question of marriage of the fit or unfit has to do with the quality of our homes, the good or bad quality of our population."

DO PEOPLE KNOW?

How many of the citizens of Ontario know, asks Dr. MacMurchy, that we buried nineteen babies under one year old every day in Ontario in 1909, or 6,932—nearly 7,000—in that one year.

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