

The Midwife.

THE ROYAL MATERNITY CHARITY.

The Royal Maternity Charity of London has just published its annual report for 1912, which is a very complete record of the work and proceedings of the Society for the past year.

The Secretary (Major Killick) has evidently the bump of order, and the names and addresses of the medical and nursing (surely it should be midwifery) staffs in the districts connected with the charity, as well as the chemists, are clearly set out, after the consulting physicians and physician and consulting midwife. We do not remember another instance of an appointment to the last-mentioned position, but this is held in connection with the Royal Maternity Charity by Mrs. Macdonald (late maternity nurse to H.I.M. the Empress of Germany), who is highly competent to fill it with distinction. We note that there are few districts in London and the suburbs in which the midwives of the Charity are not to be found at work.

In connection with the Training School for Pupil Midwives, instituted in 1816, the matrons are Mrs. Owens and Miss Anna Hill. They receive pupils in their houses, give them the practical and theoretical instruction necessary according to the rules of the Central Midwives' Board, for three months, or longer if desired, during which time these pupils attend lectures twice a week.

HISTORY, OBJECTS, AND WORK OF THE CHARITY.

The following items are taken from the history of the Charity, by the Secretary, included in the report:—

The Royal Maternity Charity of London is one of (if not the) largest and oldest of its kind extant. It was founded in the year 1757, in the reign of His Majesty King George the Second, by some benevolent City merchants.

In its first year of existence the Chairman and Committee used to meet once a month at the "East India Coffee House" to discuss the affairs of the Charity and to dispense its benefits. In that year 35 poor women were helped through the time of their trial. The utility and necessity of such a charity quickly made itself apparent, and in 1760 the number had grown to 135 cases treated in that year. After the Charity had been in existence ten years the number helped amounted to over 2,000, until in 1821 the "record" was reached of 5,733 cases in the year. Since then the numbers helped have been, of course, dependent upon the annual support of the public.

The following quaint excerpt is taken from the annual report of the Charity for 1812:—

"With a view singly to this species of distress was instituted, in the year 1757, the Charity

for delivering Poor Married Women at their Own Habitations. The Objects of it are the poor, the Sober and industrious poor, in one of the most perilous circumstances of human life. The Contributors to this Charity will footh the anguish of many a Husband by relieving the Wife of his bofom, will alleviate the agonizing pains, prevent the ficknefs and death of many a valuable Woman, preserve the life of many an helpless Infant. Surely a design conceived for such amiable purposes as these can never want encouragement while sentiments of tenderness are fuffered to animate and influence the human heart."

The Charity is entirely independent of creed or race, and nearly every European nation is at one time or another represented amongst the poor patients who attend at the office.

The object of the Charity is to provide midwives, medical attendance when required, and medicines gratuitously to poor married women in their own homes. Marriage and necessity are the only tests of eligibility, and a "Letter" from a Governor the only entrance fee, and a reference to the medical report will show the skill with which these duties are carried out.

The Charity works quietly and unostentatiously, mostly in slums and out-of-the-way nooks and corners—it has no fine buildings, standing as a perpetual reminder to the public that it is "supported entirely by voluntary contributions," and there is nothing about it to in any way catch the eye; its great reliance therefore for continued help and support is on the advocacy of friends and those who know its value in assisting the struggling married poor.

The Charity is in no way in competition with lying-in hospitals, as such, but is intended to help those who, whilst they are in pecuniary distress, are unable for many reasons to leave their homes. In most cases the mother has already a young family whom she cannot leave. If there were no alternative but to go to the hospital, the husband must either leave his work (or, if out of work, stay at home and lose opportunities of seeking it) or someone must be found to look after the home and children in his absence. If he is not able to even make this arrangement the children must be left entirely to themselves to manage as best they can.

Another point, and a most important one, is the comparative inexpensiveness of the system of tending the patients in their own homes. There are no large buildings to absorb the income, first in the erection, and secondly in their maintenance.

Every patient's home is a ward of the Charity's hospital for the time being, and however numerous the claimants or sudden the emergency, want of room is never an obstacle to the appeal of the applicant for assistance.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)