

## The Midwife.

### CLAPHAM MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

#### UNDER MEDICAL WOMEN.

Dr. Helen Webb presided at the annual Meeting of the above hospital on Thursday, the 15th inst. Experience seems to show that the ever-interesting subject of the *mother and child* always attracts a good audience of women—a proof surely that the mother spirit in the sex is strong and unconquerable. The present occasion was no exception to the rule.

Dr. Sarah Grey, in moving the adoption of the 24th Annual report, referred to the past history of the hospital, the contrast of the past with the present demonstrated the steady advance and progress of the work, and showed, in a marked degree, the influence of the modern spirit. She paid a tribute to the memory of Lord Lister, whose work and teaching had been so abundantly productive of good in maternity work. In referring to the moral aspect of the work, the speaker said that practical compassion had been the ideal of the foundress. To encourage independence, the patients paid a small sum towards the expenses.

Dr. May Thorne seconded the adoption of the Report, which was carried unanimously. She referred in her remarks to the difficulties of the Insurance Act, and optimistically suggested that it might be of use in the future when the difficulties had been removed! This raised an interesting point, and elicited information which affords yet another proof of the un wisdom, expense, and inconvenient consequences of rushing a Bill of such wide social importance through the House before it is "understand ed of the people."

To quote from the annual report:—

"When making our report a year ago, the main subject which had to be brought before the subscribers was the fact that our existence as a hospital was imperilled by the passing in 1911 of the National Insurance Act, in which Clause 12 enacted that 'no payment shall be made on account of Maternity Benefit to, or on account of any person during any period when the person in respect of whom the benefit is payable is an inmate of any hospital, infirmary, &c., supported out of public funds or by charity or by voluntary subscriptions.'

"Throughout the whole year 1912 representations were made by various London and Provincial Hospitals to impress upon the Commissioners the ruin that must ensue to all the schools of training in midwifery, whether for medical students or

pupil midwives, if patients were discouraged by loss of the maternity bounty from coming into Hospital. The consequent injury to the well-being of women of all social classes which would follow, was of course obvious to all engaged in trying to work out the details of an Act 'intended for the betterment of national health.'"

What happened was this, the Commissioners took a year to think about it! Oh the waste of time, stamps, notepaper, and temper! Then Circular 73 was issued, which brought order out of chaos and made everybody happy!

"In every case the whole of the benefit (where no such benefits have been made) or the part remaining in the hands of the Society *will become payable* to the member either in kind, or in instalments, or as a lump sum, as the Society may determine, *when the woman leaves the Hospital.*"

The matter is of such vital importance and great significance that I have ventured to quote at some length. This concession does not, however, make the Act fair all round in respect of Maternity Benefit. The charwoman may have worked industriously for 26 weeks previous to the birth of a child, showing her own contributions up to date, but if her husband's card cannot show the same regular payments she gets no Maternity Benefit, only Sickness Benefit.

Under these new conditions the Maternity Hospital now exacts a portion of the Maternity bonus from the patients in addition to the small contribution formerly fixed, but pleads for subscriptions towards the expenses of the uninsured and post office contributors. This attitude has been adopted by seven other Maternity Hospitals of London. Dr. Annie McCall, who formally moved the re-election of the Chairman, Dr. Caroline Sturge, and all the Committee, gave these interesting particulars, and pleaded, with other speakers, for more annual subscribers. She said that the work of medical women had been going ahead all over the world, but in spite of this fact the question as to whether women were really physically fit for the strain of obstetrical work and operations had recently been mooted. Her answer to that was that the work of that Hospital had been going on for 28 years, and a *man* had never once been called in! After a call for a vote of thanks had been cordially responded to, the Meeting broke up and gravitated towards the refreshment room, and enjoyed the hospitality of the institution.

One interesting fact I had almost forgotten. The adapted houses which have served their

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)