

## The Midwife.

### THE EAST END MOTHER'S HOME.

The East End Mothers' Lying-in Home, 394-396, Commercial Road, is doing excellent work among some of the very poorest of the East End population.

The Home is fortunate in its Lady Superintendent, Miss Margaret Anderson, not only because of her professional skill, but on account of her intense sympathy for the poor women who come under her care. Her yearly account of the work is always a most human document, and that incorporated in the Report presented to the Annual Meeting this year is so interesting that we quote from it at length. Miss Anderson writes:—

As the church bells pealed, and the sirens of the ships in the docks hooted, and the clocks struck the knell of 1912, we congratulated ourselves on having successfully weathered the "striking" gales of the dead year. It is to be hoped that we may never have the misfortune to again cope with such unparalleled misery as has fallen to the share of the poor of East London during the last year. When the 1,541 patients we have nursed are reviewed, and the desperate complications we have dealt with are remembered, Dr. Corner, with all his wonderful skill, patience and hopefulness, is one with us in saying that the days of miracles are not past, and that the best we could do would have been futile but for the co-operation of Almighty God, who, in His mercy, spared every mother's life. With mothers weakened by want of sufficient food, hard work and mental strain, it is not surprising that we have had a hard fight for the parent's life at many a bedside. Bad cases and still-births were especially numerous towards the end of the dock strike.

In the Home, 621 mothers have been successfully nursed. This is 93 in excess of the previous year, and is the best reward we could have, as it shows the need and efficiency of the Home. The expenses have been heavy, because the patients have been so ill and have needed extra food and medicine. Twins arrived as usual to the poorest mothers, but the shock was lightened by a baby's bundle and the "Burton Bounty." Triplets also we can show this year—three boys, all doing well. The mother is still having weekly help, but, poor soul, finds the triplets just two too many.

In the Out-Patients' Department, 920 mothers were attended. Good recoveries, if slow, were made in every case. 17,323 visits were paid by day and night. The nurses, where constant attention was necessary, remained in the bare poor homes day and night. This duty entails extreme self-sacrifice, as we can spare no special

nurse, but the attention was ungrudgingly and cheerfully given.

It is again a most pleasing duty to gratefully thank the many Samaritans who have helped us this year. The names of kind donors are seen in the List of Gifts and in the Samaritan Account, their magnificent help has been a bright spot in a terrible year. Never have our visits revealed such unparalleled poverty as during the past year. The coal strike was terrible, but when it was followed by the long dock strike it was indeed disastrous. To face a succession of crises such as our people have been through is almost beyond the limit of their endurance. To insufficient food the patients are inured, but to have no nourishment and to work hard and nurse a baby has been the too common lot of our women. The Samaritan Fund was our only hope, and splendid help was sent to us. It was carefully and judiciously dispensed to the many deserving poor. We are more than grateful. The gifts of clothing sent by Societies and our many friends bring comfort and joy to the patients and save the lives of the babies. In spite of the hardships, many babies were born healthy, but lost ground from lack of nourishment. Picture hungry infants crying for food the willing mother could not give. No sadder sight can be seen than a starved mother nursing an impatient, hungry baby, and no greater reward could be given to you than the privilege of feeding and clothing such mothers and babies.

The vast problem of bettering the poor of East London is a hard one. Their lot is misery, poverty, semi-starvation and the ever-present fear of total want—and no sooner do they get out of debt and make a fresh start than some fresh calamity overtakes them and they are thrown back. Our people have many faults, doubtless, but they have also few chances, and God help us if we criticise a woman whose life is divided into separate years, each year made up of three months' hard work, at the same time nursing an infant, nine months' purgatory, with twelve hours racking torment, and at the end—an added burden—for what mother down here can now say that she has plenty for another mouth? The hope of success never shines their way; to-day repeats yesterday, and the next year merely prolongs the toil and trouble of this, with added burdens of sickness or infirmity. Yet, when starving women were feeding hungry babies during August and September, not one would sell or give up her infant. Twice a lady, who was anxious to adopt a child, visited our patients unsuccessfully. We were sorry, for we thought of the chance for the infant, but also felt proud of the motherhood of East London. We have received tremendous help from the Stepney Invalid Kitchen during this strain, and also from the London Mothers' Convalescent Home, for which we are most thankful.

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