

members—to supply in times of need nourishment for the mothers, or milk for the babies.

The members of the General Committee are expected to undertake some portion of the following (a) to cook necessary nourishment provided for the mothers (who are unable to have it cooked for themselves) at the time of confinement; (b) to help at the fortnightly meetings.

ASSISTANCE IN CHILDBIRTH.

The new law in France for the assistance of women in childbirth, carried six months ago through the perseverance of Senator Strauss, a member of the Académie de Médecine, came into force on January 1st. Henceforth (says the Paris correspondent of the *Lancet*), every woman who claims the benefit of the law must make a declaration in writing, signed by herself or attested by two witnesses, to the mayor of her commune. In the case of those mentally incapable, the claim can be made by the mayor with the aid of two witnesses. If the patient is at the time in hospital her claim must be passed by the head of the institution, and must state that she is of French nationality and that she works at her own home or in someone's establishment for a wage. It must indicate her family responsibilities and her resources, especially whatever accrues from her husband's work, during her rest. She must furnish a note showing what contributions she (or her husband) pays, as well as a certificate from her employer stating that she works at a regular wage. The mayor forwards these documents, after due inquiry, to the Bureau d'Assistance, which has the right to institute a control inquiry. This bureau draws up a list of the applicants, the first part containing those who have their families in the commune, and the second those who belong elsewhere. This last list is addressed to the prefect by the mayor. The assistance is furnished only for the period preceding or following the particular accouchement for which the application was made, and application must be renewed for each confinement. Finally, a medical certificate that a rest period is absolutely necessary and mentioning the approximate date of confinement is required. The date on which the benefit comes into force is fixed by the mayor, but may also be determined apart from him by the prefect. The relief is payable after the confinement, even though the child be born dead. For each assisted woman a person is appointed by the mayor from a list, drawn up at the commencement of each year by the Bureau de Bienfaisance, of persons who are willing to act as inspectors of these patients. At the expiration of the period of assistance this person must state whether the mother has nursed her child at the breast. The benefit can be withdrawn on the decision of the mayor or the prefect if the woman does not conform to the regulations. The amount, which is fixed by the Conseil Municipal, is from 1 to 2 francs a day.

THE PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS.

The Central Midwives Board in this country strictly enforces its rule that in the case of discharge from the eyes of the infant, however slight, the midwife in attendance must explain that the case is one in which the attendance of a medical practitioner is required, and must hand to the husband or the nearest relative or friend present, the form of sending for medical help properly filled up and signed by her, in order that this may be immediately forwarded to the medical practitioner.

We learn from the *American Journal of Nursing* that in Massachusetts nurses are required by law to report, both to the Board of Health, and to the Charity Organization, cases of any inflammation in the eyes of the new-born, and that the State examinations are to include questions as to the knowledge of this law.

The State of Pennsylvania has recently included such requirements in the rules and regulations adopted by the Advisory Board of the State Department of Health, which read, in part as follows: "Any midwife, nurse, or other person having the care of an infant, whose eyes have become inflamed, or swollen, or reddened, at any time within two weeks after birth, shall report the same, in writing, to the health authorities of the city, borough, or township, &c. . . . within six hours of the discovery, giving the name of the infant, the names of the parents or guardians, and the street or number of their residence . . . and shall make a similar report in writing to some regularly qualified practising physician of the district." Our contemporary points out that this is a valuable piece of information for Pennsylvania nurses, because the State does not excuse violations on the plea of ignorance of the law.

It will be observed that the Central Midwives Board which, in the first instance, required midwives to send for medical assistance in any case of "inflammation" of the eyes, however slight, has now added to its rule the words, "or discharge from" the eyes, however slight. This is an alteration, the necessity for which was proved by practical experience, as midwives cited before the Board have claimed that their reason for not summoning a doctor was that there was no inflammation or swelling. This excuse is now not valid. Any discharge, even if serous in character, imposes the obligation of sending for medical assistance. If a midwife waits until the eyelids are inflamed and pus is exuding from beneath them, the chances are that the eyes will be permanently damaged, and this the Board is determined to prevent. The trouble when once started frequently increases, if not at once treated, with such appalling swiftness that it is desirable that the child should at once have the advantage of the medical treatment.

In addition it needs constant and skilled care from a midwife or nurse, for eyes which are discharging need to have the discharge constantly washed away, and the prescribed remedy instilled.

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