

MATERNITY BENEFIT AND THE SALFORD BOARD OF GUARDIANS.

The Manchester correspondent of the *British Medical Journal* writes in that paper that ever since maternity benefit under the Insurance Act came into operation, the Salford Board of Guardians have found that a considerable number of women who are entitled to the benefit have applied for and had to be granted admission to the union infirmary for their confinements and for several weeks afterwards. On their dismissal they obtained the benefit of 30s., and in some cases £3; and as the guardians had no right to demand any part of this, the women thus obtained at the expense of the ratepayers all they desired in the way of medical attention and board, and made a clear profit of the maternity benefit which was intended really to pay for the expenses incident to confinement. The guardians felt that this was hardly fair to the ratepayers, especially as some of the women in question were unmarried and had been in the infirmary several times before for the same purpose. The guardians accordingly wrote to the Commissioners, calling their attention to the matter, and asking that they should be empowered to recover part of the cost of maintenance in the infirmary out of the maternity benefit. The Commissioners have now replied to the effect that no payment on account of maternity benefit can be made while the mother is in hospital; that if the hospital is one that is supported out of public funds, the benefit must be applied in whole or in part for her dependants, if any, and that when she leaves the hospital she is entitled herself to receive the whole or such balance as remains of the benefit. The Commissioners conclude: "The right to this benefit is absolute, and the provisions of the National Insurance Acts do not enable the Commissioners to take action on the lines indicated in the resolution passed by the guardians." There can be no question that the attitude of the Commissioners is legally correct, and much can be urged in favour of the law as it stands when it applies to respectable or unfortunate women. But when it is applied to include unmarried women of bad character, who in many cases time after time thus impose on the ratepayers and afterwards spend the benefit in any way rather than for the purpose for which it was intended, it is impossible to deny that the guardians have some right to complain of the indiscriminate character of the law.

INFANT WELFARE CENTRES.

The Association of Infant Consultations and Schools for Mothers, 4, Tavistock Square, London, W.C., would be glad to hear of voluntary workers for infant welfare centres. There are schools for mothers in over 300 localities throughout the United Kingdom, and all require additional help now.

THE WIVES OF RESERVISTS.

Midwives who are interested in the scheme organized by Mrs. Bywater for helping the wives of reservists in their confinement, and who are willing to give their voluntary services, may obtain information concerning it by applying to her at 83, Thorp Road, Wallington, Surrey. It is only right that every care should be taken of the wives of those who are on active service.

AN UP-TO-DATE INFANTS' DEPARTMENT.

The new Children's Hospital at Los Angeles, California, of which a full description is given in *The Modern Hospital*, includes a very up-to-date infant ward. We read:—

"Almost one-half of the second floor has been arranged for an infant ward, with bathroom, milk laboratory, lavatories, and screened porch. In the infants' bathroom marble slabs have been built in to take the place of tubs. These slabs are set at table height, and have enough slope to afford a proper drainage into a basin set between them, the arrangement being very much like the drain boards on a kitchen sink. On the wall about three feet above the basin there is a flat nicked tank holding twenty gallons of water, with a thermometer on the face to indicate the temperature of the water. To this tank are attached the sprays, such as those used for shampoo. Fixed to the wall just above the marble slab there is an opalite shelf for the glass jars and bottles, containing everything for the care of the babies. When preparing to bathe a baby the nurse covers the slab with a white quilted pad, on which the baby is placed. It is then soaped with a liquid soap and sprayed with warm water. In this way all the danger of infection from tubs is obviated. After bathing, the baby is transferred to the warm surface afforded by the top of a blanket warmer built at table height, where it is weighed and dressed in warm, fresh clothing, which is taken from the warming oven as needed. The infants' bathroom is also equipped with a sink for the purpose of washing the nursing bottles after each feeding hour. These empty bottles are stored in drums which fit into a sterilizer placed horizontally through the wall between the infants' bathroom and the milk laboratory. The sterilizer is equipped with doors at each end. The bottles are put in, and the sterilizer closed and operated from the unsterile side. After a sufficient steam disinfection the sterilizer is opened from the milk room side and the sterile bottles filled with formulas prepared by the nurse or nurses especially assigned to this duty. The milk room is equipped with sterile water tank and sterilizer for warming the milk, and also a large refrigerator which contains the wire baskets or racks for the bottles. Each baby has a rack, with its name and number, and containing the required number of feedings for twenty-four hours."

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