

The Midwife.

THE WOMAN'S LONELY BATTLE FIELD.

The Women's Co-operative Guild is bringing before the public, and especially before the Public Health Authority, and Local Committee for the Prevention and Relief of Distress, the urgent necessity for making special provision for expectant and nursing mothers in the present time of war. Maternity introduces an additional need not covered by any general plan of relief, and provision will be needed not only in cases of unemployment, but where short time is worked.

The General Secretary, Miss Margaret Llewellyn Davies, 28, Church Row, Hampstead, London, N.W., on behalf of the Guild draws attention to the admirable scheme dealing with maternity and child welfare issued by the Local Government Board, which shows that medical advice and treatment for mothers before and after confinement, and for children in the early years of infancy, may be provided at all events in the case of the larger urban authorities "by the provision of consultation centres, which may fitly be termed Maternity Centres, to which expectant mothers, and mothers with infants and little children may be referred for advice and treatment. The operation of these Maternity Centres will be rendered most effective if co-operation is secured with the midwives of the district and with any local hospital which has a maternity department."

It is pointed out that where Infant Consultations (municipal or voluntary) or maternity hospitals or wards exist, that they would form a nucleus for the extension of the work throughout working class districts.

In places where no work of the kind has been undertaken, the Women's Co-operative Guild suggests that Maternity Centres of a very simple kind should be immediately set up.

Preferably the work should be undertaken by the Public Health Committee, and the Local Government Board has expressed its willingness to afford advice and assistance to local authorities in the initiation and extension of schemes. The new Grant in Aid for Maternity and Child Welfare enables the Local Government Board to give 50 per cent. of all costs connected with this work to municipal and voluntary organisations.

The particular directions in which help is needed are in the provision of nourishment for expectant and nursing mothers, the provision of doctor or midwife at confinement where necessary, and the provision of help in the home for the weeks after confinement.

Miss Llewellyn Davies is of opinion that "the National Relief Fund could not spend its money better than in helping the wives of the soldiers and sailors, and the wives of civil sufferers from the War, when their turn comes to face death

on the woman's lonely battlefield, for to help them is to help the babies, who are the nation's best asset."

INFANT WELFARE CENTRES.

We are informed that hundreds of volunteers have enrolled, since the War, for service at Infant Welfare Centres, of which there are now close on 400 throughout the country. To meet their demand for training, the National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality and for the Welfare of Infancy is organising a very comprehensive course of eighteen lectures, as well as practical demonstrations, at infant consultations, to be given in London from October 19th onwards. The subjects chosen deal with every aspect of infant hygiene, from the ante-natal period to the feeding and care of children up to five. Mothers and nurses will be admitted, as well as voluntary health workers. The fee for the full course is 5s., and further particulars may be obtained from the secretary, at 4, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.

A LAST EXPEDIENT.

A lady guardian of the Huddersfield Union pleading in the press for the establishment of a maternity hospital for the town and neighbourhood, states that during her work as a Poor Law Guardian she has been surprised at the number of deserted expectant mothers who come before the Guardians. At first she did not realise, but now clearly sees that it is a concerted plan between man and wife, the best they can devise in the circumstances. When the time of the woman's confinement approaches the man deserts her. She is then admitted to the workhouse and her family received at the homes. The Guardians are shocked, reflect that the woman and children will be well cared for, put the machinery at work to catch the man, and pass on to the next case. In due course the woman takes her discharge with the augmented family, and in some cases the man reappears.

The lack of provision for the emergency of child birth in Huddersfield, where the home conditions are not suitable, causes, it is asserted, the man to desert his wife, renounce his responsibility to her and the children, handing them over to the ratepayers while he goes on the loose. Surely a strong case is made out on moral and humanitarian grounds for the provision by the well-to-do of hospital accommodation for maternity cases when the poor are driven to adopt such expedients.

The next examination of the Central Midwives Board will be held in London, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester and Newcastle-on-Tyne on October 26th. The oral examination follows a few days later.

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