

## THE CHILDREN OF UNMARRIED MOTHERS.

### UNCHARITABLE RULES CONDEMNED.

A circular has been issued to the affiliated associations of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses which is of special interest in its application to the question of war babies. The circular, which is signed by the Duke of Devonshire, as President of the Institution, Lord Goschen, as Chairman of the Council, and by representatives of two other nursing organisations, says:—

It has been brought to the notice of the Council of the Queen's Institute that, owing to the rules of some of the affiliated associations, midwife-nurses have been debarred from rendering much-needed assistance in cases of single women during and after confinement. The Council desires to place on record its opinion that rules which deprive unmarried women of attendance at the time of child-birth are uncharitable in principle and exceedingly harmful in practice.

How far the principle of punishing the offences of mothers by neglecting and injuring their unoffending children can be reconciled with the dictates of humanity and the teachings of Christ, must be left to the conscience of individual nursing associations.

The women in question are often open to good influences, especially at such a time, and it appears to the Council most undesirable that they should be deprived of the services and wholesome influence of a good and fully-trained woman, and left to the care of a casual neighbour or the possible risk of deterioration involved in their being sent to the workhouse, which is often the only alternative.

The principle, however, which, in the opinion of the Council, must guide all nursing organisations in this matter, is that the welfare and the efficient rearing of the children of irregular unions is the predominant consideration, and must overrule any scruples as to undeserved benefits which may incidentally accrue to the mothers. The well-being of these children, deprived as they are, through no fault of their own, of the normal protection and advantages of parenthood, is a trust imposed on all organisations concerned with the health of the poor and the efficient rearing of the coming generation. The helplessness of this class of children renders the duty of nursing associations towards them the more imperative, and there is no branch of their work in which a breach of their trust would be more deplorable.

The Council desires to emphasise the special importance of this duty at a time when the war is causing so deplorable a loss of life among possible fathers of the future generation. It would be most regrettable if nursing associations could be held responsible for unnecessary waste of life.

The Council earnestly commends this matter to the sympathetic consideration of the nursing associations affiliated to the institute, and hopes that those associations in which such restrictive rules are in force will endeavour to see their way to alter them.

### POST-GRADUATE WEEK.

The Third Post-Graduate Week for Midwives, at the General Lying-in Hospital, York Road, S.E., affords an invaluable opportunity for practising midwives to bring their knowledge up-to-date. The week begins on Monday, May 17th, with a reception by the Matron and staff, and ends on the 22nd with a test paper (optional), in connection with which prizes are awarded. The subscription is 5s. It is open to all certified midwives. Names should be sent at once to Sister Olive.

### MIDWIFE'S APPEAL TO THE COURT.

In the High Court of Justice, on May 7th, before the Lord Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Avory, and Mr. Justice Low, Mrs. Lucy Henrietta Stock, formerly a certified midwife, appealed against the decision of the Central Midwives Board in striking her off the Midwives' Roll on October 22nd, 1914, the charge preferred against her on July 22nd being, that she was guilty of misconduct, inasmuch as for the last four months or more she had been, and still was, cohabiting with a man who was not her husband.

In opening the case counsel stated that Mrs. Stock was a married woman who, until 1909, was living with her husband at Warwick, when she left him, obtaining a separation order, the custody of the children, and an allowance of 10s. a week. The only money she had from him was £5. She went out into domestic service, and the children were sent to the workhouse. Then she was advised to train as a midwife, and subsequently passed the C.M.B. examination and was registered.

The same year she became acquainted with a widower, and a child was born, of whom it was admitted he was the father, but Mrs. Stock denied they ever lived together. Eventually the man took a house at Longford, his sister and a son living with them, and it was considered a convenient arrangement that Mrs. Stock should live in the same house. Nurse Stock, said counsel (there is no evidence of her having qualified as a nurse), carried on a good practice as a midwife, maintaining herself, and being highly esteemed in the neighbourhood.

Mrs. Stock appeared before the Central Midwives Board on July 22nd, but not in October.

The Court then adjourned.

On Tuesday the adjourned hearing was resumed, when the chief points argued were, whether the charge of co-habiting with a man not her husband would constitute misconduct in the meaning of the Central Midwives Act, whether or not that she was so living could be proved against her, and whether or not the Central Midwives Board was influenced in its decision by the report from the Clerk to the Warwick Board of Guardians, it being asserted that some of the statements contained in the report furnished were incorrect.

The counsel for the appellant urged that the term misconduct under the Midwives Act did not affect the present charge. His first point was that

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