

PROPOSED MIDWIVES ACT FOR IRELAND.

"M.D.", in a letter addressed to the *British Medical Journal*, suggests that before a Midwives' Act for Ireland is drafted on the lines of the English Act, the opinion of the medical advisers of the local supervising authorities in England should be sought. He writes: "I think that generally the opinion will be given that the present Act is unsatisfactory for the following reasons:— (1) That women engaged in sick nursing have now taken up midwifery, and (2) that puerperal fever is not so much found in the practice of midwives, whether they are Gamps or trained midwives, as in the practice of nurses who are engaged in looking after abscesses, ulcers, and discharging growths, &c., as well as doing midwifery. If trained midwives are to be a success, midwifery must be divorced from sick nursing.

"The reason generally given for tacking midwifery on to sick nursing is that without it sufficient funds cannot be found to pay for sick nursing! When the nation needs every life, we should not be content with anything but the best for the women who are adding to the man power of the nation, and we must not be content until we have provided for every lying-in woman the best service possible. This can only be done by the establishment of maternity hospitals throughout the country; the hospitals to be in charge of trained midwives who practise in the area around the hospital as well as attend to the patients in the hospital, every hospital being so placed that skilled medical attention can easily be obtained. In the sparsely populated parts of Great Britain and Ireland it is impossible for a woman to approach childbirth without running unnecessary risks—risks which would be removed by the provision of small maternity hospitals. The L.G.B. has power to make grants for assisting midwifery in necessitous cases, and the money could not be better expended than in the provision of small maternity hospitals.

"If these were provided in Ireland more good would be done than by passing a Midwives Act on the same lines as the English Act. The procedure under the present Act is extremely unsatisfactory. When a midwife is charged before the Central Midwives Board she does not give her evidence on oath, and if she lies with sufficient skill and audacity she may avoid her name being removed from the roll. A proper Midwives Act should enable the local supervising authority to bring a midwife before a properly constituted legal tribunal locally, which could take evidence on oath and have power to fine the midwife for minor offences, and for serious offences strike her off the roll. The absurdity of the present position is that the proceedings are held in London. Generally speaking, all the Central Midwives Board has before it are statutory declarations on both sides, which frequently are diametrically opposed to each other.

"Ireland is a distressful country. Let her put up with the ills she has rather than flee to those she knows not of."

A RUSSIAN MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

Mrs. Garrett Fawcett, LL.D., in an article in the Russian supplement of the *Times* on Saturday last, writes of the work of the National Union of Women Suffrage Society in this country in helping the Russian refugees. Of the Maternity Hospital in Petrograd, she writes:—

"When the crowds of homeless people poured into the Russian towns there was no house-room for most of them. Wooden barracks were run up as quickly as possible, feeding centres were established and a certain amount of clothing was provided; but there were few hospitals and few facilities for dealing with the large number of maternity cases among the refugee women. The Tatiana Committee, therefore, gratefully accepted an offer from the N.U.W.S.S. to provide doctors and nurses to staff a maternity hospital, which was in course of construction at Petrograd under the auspices of that committee, and in December of last year an administrator and a nursing organizer (Miss V. Thurstan.—Ed.) went to Russia to arrange preliminaries. Early in January the staff left for Petrograd, taking with them drugs, clothing and necessary equipment, and the Maternity Hospital has now been in full working order for some months. The Empress Alexandra has given the undertaking her protection, and the Grand Duchess Kyril and Lady Georgiana Buchanan extend to it their immediate patronage, while the Tatiana Committee provides substantial financial assistance. In connexion with this hospital, a summer home for convalescent women and children has now been opened at Souida, a healthy spot near Petrograd, and is proving to be of very real value.

"WORK IN KAZAN."

"Our medical administrator, Dr. Mabel May, came back from Russia in May to report progress and to discuss the possibilities of future work. She had been in communication with the Russian Zemstvos in the province of Kazan, and brought a detailed report of the terrible need for skilled medical help among the refugees and especially among the children. Dreadful have been the privations they have undergone during the winter. Herded indiscriminately in ill-constructed buildings, with very little light and no drainage, or crowded into underground cellars. . . . We are told that in some of these terrible buildings babies lay dead on the floor, and children suffering from all kinds of disease were almost untended.

"Fortunately, in the town of Kazan itself there is a university, and some of its students took up with great devotion the care of the refugees. They housed them as well as they could, lived among them, provided them with useful occupations, and did all in their power to rouse in them feelings of hope for the future. But when the long vacation came the students were obliged to relinquish their work and an urgent appeal was made to the British women to carry it on."

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