

3. That there is not the least possibility in the future either of all maternity cases being attended by medical practitioners, or that hospital establishments will obviate the necessity for births taking place in the undesirable homes of the patients.

4. That after the war a very large increase in the birth-rate may be looked for.

Recognizing that the midwife is essential and that all the women taking up the calling should be sufficiently educated, properly trained and thoroughly efficient, he then discusses how this can be attained, and expresses the opinion that the only method is by enabling a longer and more adequate training to be taken at smaller cost to the student, and by adopting measures to ensure that the calling shall be rendered less arduous and more attractive. He discusses precedents on the part of Government Departments to ensure an adequate preliminary training for public services, which cannot be provided except by direct Government aid, and finds them in the training for the Indian Forestry Service, and the student interpreterships in certain branches of the Consular and Diplomatic Service.

The analogy with midwives is, he says, plain. After an entrance examination to test the general fitness of the candidate, free or subsidized professional training of perhaps two years—as in France, Denmark and elsewhere (amplified in such directions as may be thought expedient)—would be provided, and at its close, a professional examination would give evidence of fitness to practise.

As to the provision of a practice subsequently, Dr. Hope states that it may not be possible to assure this, but an assurance of quite another character can be given to stimulate the interest and industry of the midwife and to preserve freedom of choice to the patient, by means of a payment over and above the fee which she receives from each patient. He is of opinion that an arrangement whereby every midwife would be assured of a fee of not less than one guinea for each birth could be quite easily brought into operation and safeguarded from imposition, just as is done in Liverpool in the case of the doctor's emergency fee.

Dr. Hope says further, "If it were thought desirable to supervise midwives direct from a Government Department, nothing would be simpler, and the midwife would lose the apprehension—well founded, I fear, in some localities—of the possibility of inquisitorial inspection by persons less qualified than herself, and of being made a scapegoat in difficulties which could neither be foreseen nor controlled—a system which can only be discouraging and likely to rouse a feeling of resentment towards her supervisor, not to say a spirit of revolt. Many of the difficulties connected with the midwifery problem will then be solved. The needs cannot be fully met by philanthropic effort, or by effort of bodies such as County Nursing Associations, admirable as they are."

Dr. Hope considers that the cost of the schemes he outlines, to the Imperial Exchequer, would be

"roughly between £80,000 and £100,000 per year—a sum which cannot be considered large in view of the advantages which would accrue."

## HOLIDAYS FOR POOR MOTHERS.

DEAR MADAM,—The suggestion made by Mrs. Pember Reeves that poor mothers should have legal holidays, to which attention is drawn in the current issue of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, is the most humane and sympathetic which has been put forward for some time; but if we are to wait until the State is able to pay for them, I fear the present generation of mothers will not have much benefit from the proposal. The National Debt, to say nothing of education and Infant Welfare schemes will tax all the energies of the Chancellor of the Exchequer for many years to come. You say that it remains to put the idea into practical concrete form. May I, therefore, make a proposal which is certainly concrete, which I believe to be eminently practical and which would cost the nation nothing. That is that after the war the Voluntary Aid Detachments should undertake to carry Mrs. Pember Reeves' suggestion into effect.

Throughout every county these Detachments are organized. Will their members be content after the war, to be disbanded, and to resume the life many of them led before they were brought into contact with the realities? Some, no doubt, will return to the constant round of pleasure which was their business before the war; some may decide to adopt nursing as a profession, and enter hospitals for training. A limited few may become certified midwives, and, accompanied by their horses roam the Canadian prairies; but a large residue will return to their own homes, and, one hopes, will seek for some useful outlet for their energies.

A weak point in relation to the work of Voluntary Aid Detachments in relation to nursing is that it is mostly part-time work. This would be no disadvantage in relation to the mothers' holidays scheme. One half day a week, or a few hours several days a week, could be spared by most V.A.D. members.

I suggest that the V.A.D. Organization should be put at the disposal of the nation for this bit of work; that those members willing to take it up should first qualify themselves by a course of training in domestic economy, and at an Infant Welfare Centre, or Babies' Welcome, recognized as giving the training required, and that then, through their local V.A.D. branch, they should undertake regularly the work allotted to them.

MARGARET BREAY.

The Queen recently paid a surprise visit to the Windsor Infant Nursery, and was received by Mrs. A. Douglas Crofts (Hon. Secretary) and the Matron, Miss E. Ross. It is claimed that this is the oldest *crèche* in England, it having been established about 43 years ago.

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