

The Midwife.

MOTHERS' CLUBS.

Mr. David Lechmere, writing in *Maternity and Child Welfare* on the above subject, says in part:—

Of the formation of clubs there is no end, but clubs which receive official sanction and Government grants towards their working expenses have somewhat of novelty about them.

As a rule the clubs meet once weekly in some convenient centre, the title to membership being based upon the possession of a baby. It does not matter whose the baby is; so long as the person is in charge of it she is entitled to all the benefits of the club, and her presence will be welcome. Babies are the kings and queens of the club, and every member of the staff is at their and their mothers' service. A well-constituted club does not require extensive premises, elaborate or luxurious furnishings. The pictures on the walls may not be masterpieces of art, but they catch the eye, and win home to each member's heart, dealing as each does with some detail of the comfort and well-being of "His Majesty King Baby."

A typical club should be situated on the ground level. There should be no long and tiresome stairs for wearied mothers to climb. The outer door should open if possible directly into a passage, hall, or covered place—a pram garage—where baby carriages can be stored until their services are again required.

A general club room comes next in importance, and it must have an open fireplace, tiled and cheery-looking. A modern gas fire may take its place if a fireplace is impossible, but gas fires are cheerless things at the best, and lack the open welcome which a well-kept glowing coal fire brings. In either case fire guards must be provided. Chairs there will be in plenty—comfortable, roomy wooden arm-chairs up to twelve or twenty, and these are preferably arranged round the fireside in a wide circle. Cradles will also be provided—not too many; three or four will prove all-sufficient, for the members of these clubs prefer to keep their babies in their arms. The cradles, although you will certainly not believe it, should you chance to see one, will probably not have cost more than a few pence. Made from banana crates, covered with dainty chintz and equipped with a well-fitting mattress and a tiny pillow filled with chaff, a woollen blanket and coverlet to match

the crib, no baby could wish for a finer home. The desire—there are no rules—of the club is that members shall learn, shall know how to help themselves. Charity does not enter the doors, though love is ever present. Why, the very tea, the inviting bread and butter, the choice of cakes are bought and paid for by the subscription which membership demands, a penny at each meeting. Not compulsory, mark you, and yet it is a rare occasion when the humble coin is not forthcoming; and disbelieve if you will, but these humble coins, small and insignificant as they appear, will in all likelihood show a tiny profit, a working margin when the year's returns are made.

In addition to the club room, a play room, doctor's room, small kitchen, and lavatory accommodation are required, and it is well that the first and second of these should open directly from the club room. A play room is essential, because not only may mother bring baby, but she may bring the older members of the family who are not at school. It is not to be expected that mothers can leave their homes to enjoy the rest and comfort of their club if their thoughts are wandering to what little Tommy and Mary are doing in their absence. No, they must come, but as little Mary or Tommy would make too much noise in our club room they are accommodated with a room of their own, practically empty of the furnishing we adults love, but filled with all the varied paraphernalia of toys which we have been able to beg, borrow, or get in any way we can. Here to their heart's content the kiddies play, and if at any time they should desire to see mother—why, the door is open, and mother can either go to them or they to her, but it is seldom indeed that a visit on either side lasts for more than a few moments. The doctor's room, or private chat room, is just an ordinary parlour, with nothing more official in it than a babies' weighing machine, a desk where all official papers of the club are kept, a tiny medicine cupboard, and some doctor's instruments.

Of governors and officials we have many. First and chief, although it is not imperative, for the Local Government Board gives grants to purely voluntary bodies, there is the great Health Committee who provides the funds under certain conditions, and fathers the institution. To them the Government grants, which

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