

The Midwife.

THE EAST END MOTHERS' HOME.

The Annual Report of the East End Mothers' Lying-in Home, 396, Commercial Road, E., is always an interesting document, more especially the Report of Miss Anderson, the Lady Superintendent. Miss Anderson writes:—

"To the care and responsibility of the lives of the patients has been added the vital question of feeding them.

"Six hundred and fifty babies were born in the Home. Of these nineteen died before birth, the cause of the tragedy being generally ante-partum hæmorrhage; 106 came prematurely, and of these, all weighing under 5 lbs., some under 3 lbs., only sixteen died. Of the remaining 525 babies born at full term only one infant died (congenital heart disease). This fine result is due in a great measure to the fact that the expectant mothers are under our care for at least three months before the time that the babies ought to arrive, and the faith the mothers have in Dr. Corner is so magnificent that they obey implicitly the instruction given them at his Monday clinics, and thus realise the importance of early help in slight complications.

"Therefore, the year's work in the Home stands out successfully, although anxiety for absent husbands, air raids, and the long food queues are not the ideal circumstances we would choose for motherhood. Yet these things exist, and it is heart-breaking to send mothers and infants out from the care and comfort of the Home to their own impossible shelters.

"We often talk of what will be done for them in the way of housing when the war is over, and the men who have done their best for our Empire return, and plan how, at least, every baby shall have its right—a fighting chance—meantime we give Advice—God help us."

In the district 17,185 district visits have been paid. A visit lasts from half-an-hour to six hours, sometimes, in severe cases, longer, so many hours have been spent by the Nurses out of the Home, and unless our day had been a twenty-four-hour one, this number of visits could not have been paid. A new responsibility is now added by the fear of what the result will be if the Nurses who work so hard in insanitary surroundings are underfed.

There were two maternal deaths in the district, concerning which Miss Anderson writes:—

"Although too heavy for us, the wonder is that our casualties are not heavier. Our work lies in an air raid area, and the women to the very last day, when an air raid warning is given, run to the nearest shelter in all weathers, partially dressed, dragging their children, usually carrying the last baby. During one raid the Home sustained considerable damage, but, fortunately, no one was

hurt. The little wife of an airman, whose baby was born in a cottage, amid surrounding shot and shell, was so calm; she only wanted to know if she was doing her best for the baby, because 'he' wanted it so badly. As another baby came into a noisy world, his grandmother and little sister were killed in the same house. Yet another baby was born as his soldier father's coffin was carried out of the house. The poor mother wanted so much to watch the funeral, but couldn't. The mothers' lives are one anxiety, so we are thankful to Almighty God that our sad tale of death is no longer.

"The midwifery and maternity pupils have worked hard and well, for we have been continuously short handed, yet somehow they have found time to study, if study was necessary with so much practical experience, and the successes at the examinations are up to our ordinary high standard.

"Our needs are like the sands of the seashore. Want of nurses, want of hot water (for our system went wrong this year, and for five months we had to heat by gas all the hot water that was needed), want of beds, and last but not least, want of space. Our greatest calamity, however, is that, under existing circumstances, mothers cannot entirely feed their babies, and although we get milk tickets from the Ministry of Food for them, yet you all know that the artificial feeding of infants is responsible to a great extent for the heavy infant death rate. To misquote a Scotch psalm:—'The troubles that afflict the home, in numbers many be, but yet at length out of them all, the Lord shall set it free.'"

THE MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE BILL.

The Public Health Sectional Committee of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland views with disfavour the Maternity and Child Welfare Bill now before Parliament and desires that the Government should press forward with a Ministry of Health Bill, and postpone the consideration of the Maternity and Child Welfare Bill until that is disposed of.

Mr. Hayes Fisher, on the other hand, in view of the opposition of vested interests to the establishment of a Ministry of Health, of which he is entirely in favour, regards the Maternity and Child Welfare Bill as a practical and urgently needed measure which should bear immediate fruit in the saving of child life. It is, he says, the Bill by which Lord Rhondda sought to save the 1,000 babies' lives a week, which he desires to see operative, without waiting for the various interests concerned in the establishment of a Ministry of Health to be adjusted.

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