

the benefits of the latter would have been much greater.

Both nurses and midwives know that in regard to the health of expectant mothers and nursing mothers, and of children under five, there is wide scope for the beneficial work of a Ministry of Health.

The expectant mother too often overworks up to the time that labour sets in, and resumes her normal work within ten days of her confinement; with what ill effects those in charge of the gynæcological wards of hospitals can testify. The death rate of children under a year old is appalling, but the still-births, and the wastage of embryonic life which never arrives at fruition, are even more serious.

We look forward with the keenest anticipation and pleasure to the influence of the Ministry of Health in the prevention of conditions of which the above results are the direct outcome.

In assuming the powers and duties of the Local Government Board the Ministry of Health to be established will inevitably take over the supervision of the Poor Law Infirmaries, including their nursing services. This is one direction in which the duty imposed on the Minister in connection with "the training of persons engaged in Health Services" will be exercised.

In relation to the powers to be transferred to the Ministry of Health under Clause 3 of the Bill, it is obviously expedient that these should be exercised by a single authority having expert knowledge of the subjects dealt with. For instance, the Privy Council, which is at present the superior authority of the Central Midwives Board, cannot be regarded as having special qualifications, other than judicial ones, for this office.

One of the most important provisions of the Bill is Clause 4, which provides for the establishment of Consultative Councils, which shall give advice and assistance on matters affecting the health of the people, necessary conditions being that every such council (1) shall include persons of both sexes and (2) shall consist of persons having practical experience of the matters referred to the Council.

We have indicated above how intimately the Ministry of Health will be concerned with questions affecting the welfare of women, and it is only fitting that women should assist the Minister in the discharge of his important duties, and, on the broader issue, a precedent is being created which may well be adopted by other Government Departments.

It is a wise and necessary provision that the persons appointed to these Councils should have practical experience of the matters on which their advice is sought.

A good augury for the future of the new Department is that the Bill is being piloted through Parliament by a medical expert, and, as much of the work of the Local Government Board is to be absorbed into the Ministry of Health, we may hope that the President of the Local Government Board, who is responsible for the Ministry of Health Bill, will become the first Minister under the new Act.

#### MOTION FOR SECOND READING OF MINISTRY OF HEALTH BILL.

On Wednesday, February 26th, the President of the Local Government Board (Dr. Addison) moved in the House of Commons:—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

The debate was of great interest, and we refer those who desire to read it *in extenso* to the Parliamentary Debates for the above date, published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, and obtainable through any bookseller, price 3d.

#### POINTS FROM THE SPEECHES.

##### THE PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD.

"This Bill deals with a very positive national need. During the past four years we have lost about 700,000 of the pick of our race in the battles connected with the war—during the months of October, November, and December last year there was as high a mortality in the average per month from influenza alone as the average monthly mortality during the war from causes connected with the war. The men and women who were lost during that quarter were very largely people in the prime of life, as is the case, unfortunately at the present time.

"The House will recognise that there are two stages in which we must proceed to deal with this matter. . . . You have the central organization and the local authority. This Bill relates to the central organization.

"We think the time has come when it is our duty in the near future to deal with the local services and to disentangle the treatment of sickness from any relation with the Poor Law.

"If you are going to deal with sickness as a whole from the point of view of promoting the strength and vigour of our people, we cannot consider it in its relation to destitution. We have to consider it merely as a problem of sickness, and that is why this declaration is in the Bill.

MR. J. H. THOMAS.

"I should like to see some more provision made in connection with the taking over of our voluntary hospitals. . . . As far as the working classes are concerned, it is one of two things which is open to them—charity or the Poor Law. So far as the Labour Party is concerned, they are quite clear and quite determined—and they believe the time is not inopportune—that instead of these great institutions being maintained and being dependent on the charity and good will of the public, they will be administered by the public as a whole."

The Bill was read a second time.

#### WOMAN MEDICAL OFFICIAL.

Miss Janet Mary Campbell, M.D., M.S., has been appointed by Dr. Addison to be a Medical Officer of the Local Government Board in special charge of the work of maternity and child welfare. She has been a medical officer of the Education Board.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)