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EDITORIAL.

THE ATTRACTION OF MATERNITY NURSING.

Never before in the history of the Nation has so much attention been directed to Maternity Nursing, or has there been so great a demand for nurses to take up this branch of work. The Great War has emphasised the importance of the conservation of Infant Life. The application of the National Insurance Act has shown the need for increased provision for the care of maternity cases, the housing shortage has accentuated the need for hospital accommodation, and Municipal Maternity Homes and Hospitals are being organised. For some time, also, under the War Office, there has been, as part of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, a department dealing with the nursing in Military Families Hospitals, which are largely concerned with Maternity work, and which, as we notify in another column, is now being organised as a separate Nursing Service. The work in these hospitals, a number of which are recognised as training schools for midwives by the Central Midwives Board, affords to trained nurses a valuable opportunity of obtaining the additional qualification of "certified midwife" and also of employment in the important branch of maternity nursing, and it is one which nurses may well consider on deciding on their future careers.

One great attraction of maternity nursing is that it is fundamental. It is near enough to the beginning of things for there to be good hope that if the steps of the young mother are set in the right way she will respond to the teaching offered to her, and the result will be that the standard of health of the race will be raised. All maternity nurses know the anxiety of the large majority of mothers who come under their care to do their best for their children, if only

they know the way, and how extremely responsive they are to the guidance of the nurse whom they have come to trust during her attendance on them during child-bearing.

Another attraction of maternity work is its hopefulness. Ordinary hospital work has a sad side to the thoughtful worker, both because of her consciousness that much of her work is often palliative, not remedial, and because of the inevitable percentage of deaths which occur in hospital practice. The Maternity Home, on the contrary, is the gate of life. The infants born there are started, for better for worse, on their life's career during the all-important first weeks. And in regard to the mothers, once the act of child-bearing is over, there remains the restful period of convalescence, until recovery is established, and joy in the possession of the new baby which, as they say, "brings the love with it."

Whether, therefore, from the point of view of national and social service, of the nursing interest, and of the hopeful atmosphere characteristic of maternity nursing, it deserves the serious consideration of nurses when determining in what department of nursing they shall specialise.

There remains the consideration of the Maternity Departments of our Poor Law Infirmaries, for these cannot be considered an entirely hopeful environment. The tragedy of a ruined life is often played out there, and further, that sad class, the feeble minded, who again and again return to its shelter for a time, while they bear children who, as they grow up, often become a charge on the State—whether in hospitals, asylums, or prisons—must occasion deep sadness to a thoughtful and sympathetic nurse. On the other hand there is great opportunity for helping many who need, and are responsive to, a helping hand in trouble.

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