

# The Midwife.

## SUPPLY OF MILK TO EXPECTANT MOTHERS, NURSING MOTHERS AND INFANTS.\*

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Every investigation of past years into the subject of Infant Mortality emphasises the difficulty in providing infants, whose mothers are unable to suckle them, with suitable food. It was this difficulty which led originally to the establishment in Liverpool of centres at which suitably prepared milk for such infants could be provided.

It has now become clear that in a considerable proportion of cases by supplying the mother with milk, on easy terms, her ability to suckle the infant is restored, and this principle also has been largely followed. The step forward in providing the expectant mother with milk was a short one. It must be borne in mind that the guiding principle in this work was not the relief of destitution, but rather provision for the ailing, whether expectant mothers, nursing mothers, or infants.

The extent of the work will be recognised by showing that upwards of 20,000 persons were receiving milk during the year 1920, of which number approximately, and in round numbers, slightly more than 1,000 were expectant mothers, 9,000 were nursing mothers, and 6,000 were infants under 12 months of age. There were also 4,000 children between the ages of 1 year and 5 years.

Approximately 325,000 gallons of fresh milk, and nearly 17 tons of dried milk were distributed during the year 1920.

The work has been in operation for approximately 15 years and has been gradually increasing in magnitude up to the year quoted.

The course of the rate of infant mortality during the last 20 years is indicated on the accompanying diagram (this showed a fall from 202 per thousand in 1895 to 113 per thousand in 1920.—Ed.), and there is no shadow of doubt that the distribution of milk has had an important share in bringing these results about. It must be remembered that the work is carried on in conjunction with the Infant and Maternal Welfare Clinics, and that the milk for expectant or nursing mothers is supplied on the prescription of the doctor, whilst in the case of infants the mixture is prepared in conformity with the instructions of the doctor. It will be appreciated therefore that an immense amount of care has to be exercised in the preparation of a large number of mixtures to meet the varying ages and needs of the infants.

The evidence in support of the view that this has had its share in lessening the rate of infant

mortality is analogous in kind to the evidence in regard to the diminution in the mortality from the various forms of infectious disease.

The work is well worth while carrying on but it is extremely difficult, requiring a great amount of close and careful attention, and the expenditure of a large sum of money. No doubt many municipal bodies think that the saving of life is not worth so much trouble and expense—the Corporation of Liverpool, however, are of a contrary opinion, and intend to proceed with this work.

It is common knowledge that in a Circular dated August 9th, 1918, the Local Government Board approved of the provision, by Sanitary Authorities, of milk for necessitous mothers, but this point is entirely different from that under consideration.

Most valuable service can be, and has been rendered in Liverpool, by voluntary associations and notably by midwives. The Liverpool and District Trained Midwives' Association have co-operated cordially with the staff of the Health Committee.

Excluding the cost of the actual clinics the amount expended on the distribution of milk during the year 1920 was approximately £70,000, and the amount realised by the sale of milk was slightly more than £35,000. 50 per cent. of the net cost of this work is recoverable from the Ministry of Health.

It remains to be added that many other important works, such as housing operations, municipal scavenging, street washing, adequate water supply, and so forth, have all had their effect upon infant mortality, and it is not claimed that the great reductions are wholly due to any one cause.

## CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD FOR IRELAND.

### EXAMINATION PAPER.

The following is the examination paper set at the examination by the Central Midwives Board for Ireland on June 20th :—

1. What are the causes of delay in the third stage of labour?
2. Describe the methods of resuscitation in "Asphyxia Neonatorum" pending the arrival of a doctor.
3. What are the contra-indications to breast feeding?
4. What is prolapse of the cord? Describe how you would treat such a case before the arrival of a doctor.
5. A nurse is in attendance upon a case of Puerperal Fever. What steps must she take in accordance with the Regulations of the Central Midwives Board?
6. What are the symptoms of pregnancy?

\*A paper read at the Second English-speaking Conference on Infant Welfare, London, July 6th, 1921.

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