

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE IN LINCOLN.

The City of Lincoln prides itself on possessing one of the most, perhaps the most, complete and efficient Maternity and Child Welfare Schemes in the country.

The work was begun in Lincoln in 1908 by a Voluntary Committee who appointed a Health Visitor to visit in the homes. It was taken over by the Corporation in 1910 and in 1912 Miss Edith M. L. Davies, the present Superintendent was appointed. The outstanding success of the scheme and the efficiency and the rapid development of the work is generally recognised in the city as being in great measure the result of Miss Davies's energy, foresight and determination.

The first centre opened in 1911 was held first in the Mayor's parlour and, when it became too large for that, in the cheerless offices of the Health Department. In 1917 a house was found and adapted for use as a Centre. Both in finding the house and its adaptation, Miss Davies showed that instinct for a building suitable to her purposes which never fails her. The Centre was opened in 1918, and at the opening Miss Davies said to the guests as she showed them round, "This year is the year for the Centre, the next will be the year for the Maternity Home."

Already the house had been found in a street round the corner and thanks to the funds raised by the School for Mothers' Committee, and to the generosity of a private citizen, the house was bought and held ready for the time when the City Council should be ready to take it over. This happened according to plan the next year.

The gardens of the two houses backed on to one another and when the intervening wall was taken down a good garden, of which the fullest use has been made, was available and the premises were self-contained. In the part of the garden adjoining the Infant Welfare there is a playground for the children, and covered cloisters where prams are left and mothers sit and chat. A small out-building here is used for the weighing and sale of dried milk, virol, &c. The Maternity Home garden is chiefly under grass and here again the convalescent patients sit, and in hot weather the tiny babies can be put out in their cots. Another outhouse forms the laundry. The garden, like every other part of the premises, is beautifully kept. Indeed the order and tidiness of the whole place is a feature which strikes the most casual observer. Inside, the same order and freshness is observable and as noticeable is the fact that mothers and nurses go about always with bright faces feeling obviously that the place belongs to them.

The activities of the Centre are manifold. Infant consultations are held three times a week, the total attendances of babies and children for the last year being 13,039. A school for mothers meets weekly, and voluntary workers look after the babies and toddlers while the class is held.

Ante-Natal and Post-Natal clinics are held and these and the Infant Consultations are attended by a woman doctor who also takes a venereal disease clinic at the Centre once a week. Dental Clinics for the mothers and children are held once a week. Miss Davies lives at the Centre, and here also are quarters for some of the pupil Midwives, for the Maternity Home with the associated District Midwifery, form a training school for Midwives.

The isolation ward for the Maternity Home is at the Centre buildings. The Maternity Home has beds for 14 patients and the percentage of occupied beds is always high. As one of the nurses was once heard to say, "They talk about a falling birthrate but we do not ever feel it here."

The Home is both efficiently and economically carried on, the net cost per bed being £1 18s. 4d. only. In spite of the severe industrial depression the receipts from the patients compare most favourably with those of other places. The

Home is popularly known in Lincoln as Miss Davies' Home, and it reflects to a wonderful degree the great hearted kindness of the Superintendent.

A Sister-in-charge lives at the Home. Three district Midwives live in different parts of the city, and between the Home and District work more than half of the whole number of births in the city are conducted by the Corporation Midwives. The district midwives and the Sister of the Home help with the instruction of the pupils. Miss Davies is the certified teacher in Midwifery. The school passed all its candidates, 13 in number, at the Central Midwives' Board Examinations for 1925. The doctors of the city are in a rota for seeing abnormal cases at the Home. Home Helps are supplied in connection with the Maternity and Child Welfare Scheme. Economy of administration has always been a characteristic of the scheme, the total cost means a rate of 2d. only.

Further extensions of the work are planned. A line of cottages which forms the boundary on one side of the premises has been bought by the City Council, and here it is intended to build a new Maternity Home and a ward for marasmic babies; the present home will act as a nurses' home and administrative block.

The position of the Maternity and Child Welfare work in the city is unique. Voluntary workers of all classes are pleased, almost proud, to share in what is done. All political parties befriend the work.

Whatever depression may visit the city and whatever changes may occur, no one doubts that the efficiency of the Maternity and Child Welfare Scheme will be maintained and will be extended in as far as extension will benefit the mothers and children of the city.

For Miss Davies is a woman not to be resisted. Everyone recognises her amazing kindness; her sympathy is boundless and so almost are her private benefactions, the troubles and the joys of every mother and every nurse under her care she has always made her own. But as striking as her kindness is her dauntless spirit and her sense of justice. She can refuse help as well as give it, and no threats have ever moved her from the course she considered right. She stands four square to every wind of heaven. In a fight she is lion hearted, but when she has won it no bitterness is left. The enemy of to-day becomes the friend of to-morrow because not a man or woman in Lincoln but recognises that she fights never for her own hand, but always for a cause and for the work itself.

SERVANTS OF THE PUBLIC.

Speaking recently at a conference on "Nursing as a Career," convened at the Central Bureau for Women's Employment in London, Mr. H. L. Eason, C.B., C.M.G., M.D., Superintendent of Guy's Hospital, made a few statements to which we take exception. He said "the nurse was there as the servant of the medical staff, neither as critic nor colleague." Both the nurse and the medical staff are the servants of the public, and in these days their highly skilled work is so interdependent that their relations should be conducted with the utmost courtesy. If such relations do not pertain between these professional workers, the patient is the loser. The attitude of master and servant between doctor and nurse, advocated by Mr. H. L. Eason, is entirely out of date, and yet the loyalty of the nursing staff to the medical staff is proverbial.

Mr. Eason stated that no nurse could ever face her Matron in her office without being in abject terror, but although he would like to see problems discussed between them, he is evidently in "abject terror" himself of granting "self government" to these presuming persons!

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