

MOTHERS AND BABIES IN PORTUGAL.

By MISS EUPHEMIA TORRY.

The Maternity block of the great hospital of San José, in Lisbon, is divided into two buildings. The one facing the street contains consulting rooms and rooms fitted up for obstetric examinations. Here are also a number of bed-rooms where, to my surprise, I saw no one in bed. Pregnant women may come here three, or even six, months before their confinement, but as long as it is healthy for them to do so, they go to daily work. In the more advanced stages they rest, and I saw a group of them in a sitting room.

The Matron, who was good enough to take me round, was rather scornful about her patients. Most of them were servants, she said, and left me to presume that the children were illegitimate, though apparently this did not apply to all, for there were bedrooms where elder children of a family could be cared for during the mother's confinement. These rooms were not then being used for the privilege had been so abused it had been stopped.

Regarding payment Matron said very scornfully:

"No one in Portugal ever pays for anything if they don't want to." The theory is that women "pay what they can," but a servant girl at wages now current in Portugal is not likely to be able to pay anything worth having.

The wards were in a two storey building set back from the street. We entered one with about twenty beds for treatment of abortion cases only. On the wall was a big notice: "Abortion is a crime," but in spite of a campaign against it

Matron said it was estimated that twenty per cent. of pregnancies were aborted. This Matron was so very scornful about everything that I would have taken her remarks with a grain of salt if I had not, later, heard much the same tale in every Portuguese hospital, nearly all of them having a special ward for abortion cases.

In the maternity wards I found all babies in bed with their mothers, but it was feeding time and all were being suckled. After their feed they were taken away and put in cradles in a glassed-in balcony.

The wards were very plain but large and airy enough and looked tidy. I guessed that the scornful Matron would be just as severe with her underlings as with her patients.

This home is also a training school for midwives who have a good lecture hall and also a museum with anatomical specimens preserved in spirit as well as diagrams, bones, etc. The training is spread over two years as it is taken in conjunction with the general training at San José.

The care of infants does not end when the mother leaves the maternity home. Lisbon has several "day homes" or crèches for infants, one being in the middle of a lovely park. Infants of from three weeks to three years old, but mostly infants in cradles, are left for the day in the care of one fully trained nurse and a couple of younger assistants. Besides

two day-rooms and a bit of garden there is a bath-room where the infants are bathed daily and a well-equipped little milk-kitchen which not only bottles milk for the crèche babies, but for many others whose mothers come for their daily ration, all ready in sterilised bottles.

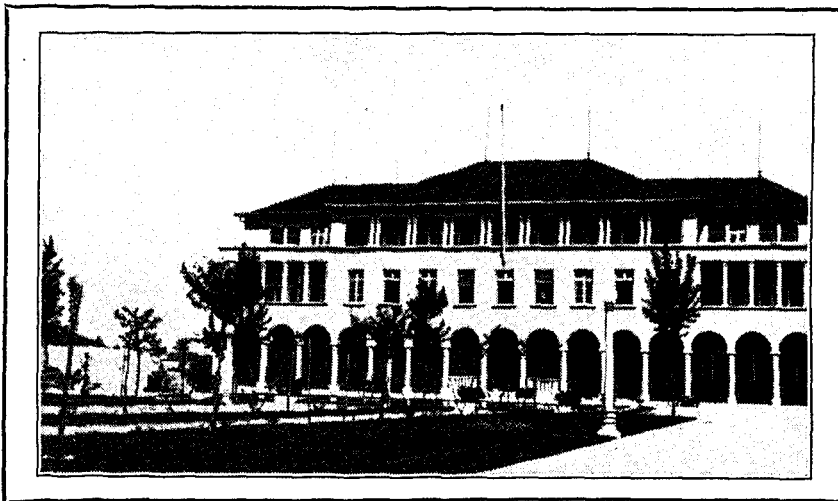
This particular crèche is financed by the Municipality of Lisbon. Others are run by private individuals or groups. The President of the Republic has his summer residence at Cascais, some twenty miles from Lisbon, and founded there a crèche in memory of a son who died. Only ten or a dozen babies are taken, but this crèche has a double object and is mainly for the education of mothers who come to demonstrations and talks about infant welfare and especially about feeding.

Oporto (where port comes from), the second city of Portugal, has built a model maternity home which is intended to provide for both rich and poor. It had been ten years a-building when I saw it and had still no patients though it was nearing completion and, so far as I could judge, perfection.

Oporto had sent to Switzerland for the architect of the

maternity home at Lausanne, considered the best of its kind. Guide books often say of an Italian palace that it is "skilfully adapted to its sloping site," and the same may well be said here, where the front has three storeys and the back, where the hill falls sharply away, has four, the extra one underneath being used for kitchens, furnaces and so forth.

The top storey is smaller than the rest and leaves a wide colonnaded terrace on to which the private wards



MATERNITÀ " JULIO DENIS " MODEL MATERNITY HOME, OPORTO.

and the resident doctors' quarters open.

All cupboards are built into the walls and all doors are flush with the wall to avoid dust. Each floor also has cupboards (if I may call them so) hiding electric and heating apparatus, easy to get at for repair or adjustment.

The home is planned for 120 beds divided among free, or nearly free wards with eight beds apiece, second class wards with two beds and first class with one bed. One department is called "secret maternity," where any expectant mother may come, without giving her name, receive the necessary care and, when strong enough, leave with her infant, still without disclosing her name.

This home will also be a training school for midwives who, I was told, would have two years' training. But I think there may be some mistake about this, for my informant, a member of the City Council, knew more about finance and construction than medical matters. Whether it was because this Councillor accompanied me or not, I do not know, but it struck me that everything had been provided except a good nursing staff. The quarters were ready for them but where were they coming from? There are doubtless plenty of competent midwives in Portugal but the general quality of the nursing profession is not high. Oporto seemed to think that this model home would necessarily

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