

## THE PUBLIC WELL-BEING—(continued).

**A Mother's Ordeal.**

REGARD for the welfare of deserted, and especially of unmarried mothers, is a valuable step forward, though it has taken a considerable time for ill-conceived public opinion and official rectitude to come round to the humane view of the treatment and care of unmarried mothers. There is another point of importance in the Ministry's suggestion that adequate lying-in accommodation should be provided. The necessity for this was manifested recently in the distressing circumstances wherein a Southwark woman was taken in a taxicab to three hospitals before she was able to gain admission to undergo a confinement operation. The matter came

before the Lambeth Board of Guardians, and the hospitals concerned were severely criticised. But it is easy to criticise; if a hospital has no accommodation to meet a sudden emergency of that kind, what is it to do? With a little notice it might, doubtless, contrive some plan. Even if a hospital is prepared for such emergency cases, there is always the possibility that one emergency may follow another, and emergency accommodation cannot be limitless. Perhaps some hospital co-ordination might meet the point, so that a patient might be directed immediately to a hospital that at the time is known to be capable of receiving the case.

**Mothercraft Hostels.**

A SCHEME to help the unmarried mother was described in the *Daily Chronicle* last week in the words of a trained nurse who is shortly to open a hostel in Liverpool. She considered the bad point in all rescue work had been the separation of mother and child, and expressed her opinion that most social workers to-day believe it best for the child and mother to be together.

"The object (said the nurse) of the Liverpool scheme, which will be run under a committee of interested people, is to provide a hostel for unmarried expectant mothers where their babies can be born. It is important that unmarried mothers should be taught how to care for their babies, because the death-rate among illegitimate children is high. As far as I know few hostels where these babies are received give the mothers a really adequate training in mothercraft.

"We shall insist that, whenever possible, the mother shall feed her child, and she will not be expected to go out to work until the baby is at least six months old.

"During this time, if she has not already a trade or profession, she will be taught how to earn her own living, and, when able to leave her baby, she will go out to daily work, and come back to the hostel at night."

There is a home in London run on similar lines—the Day Servants' Hostel, in Danvers Street, Chelsea—where there are sixteen unmarried mothers who go out to work every day and return to their babies when work is done. The superintendent says the aim of the hostel is to create a home atmosphere of a genuine type, where mothers and babies can live happily and normally. She hopes that the last has been seen of schemes for big institutions.

**Cheap Child Labour.**

A DISAGREEABLE aspect of the problem of domestic service was disclosed at a meeting of the Merthyr Board of Guardians. Applications were received for children between the ages of ten and twelve years from the Children's Homes, for adoption, and several members protested against acceding to these requests on the grounds that there were many people anxious to secure young children brought up in the homes because they became useful when they were fourteen or fifteen years old. Such people took them as adopted girls, but they were really looking for cheap servants, or for a chance of getting some revenue from them. It was stated that in the past the Board had had to take children back

because their lives were being sapped away. The Board took the humane and sensible view of their duty in deciding that the proper course was to keep the girls until they were of proper age and, then to find them suitable occupations at reasonable wages. Those who are anxious to adopt children generally desire them at an earlier age than ten or twelve, and in all cases, even where it seems obvious that adopted children will benefit by being taken into private homes to be cared for, it is important that the authorities who are primarily responsible for them should continue to keep an eye on their welfare. The alertness of the Merthyr Guardians ought to be brought to the notice of all other Boards whose organisation includes children's homes.

**Mothers Who Work.**

THE theory that infantile mortality is highest in cases where mothers go out to work is not supported by Dr. Sidney Barwise, the medical officer of health for Derbyshire. In his annual report he says it is interesting to note that in Derbyshire the districts with the high infantile mortality are not those where a large proportion of the women go out to work. The predominating occupation in the districts of high infantile mortality is that of coal mining. As a class the coal miners, compared

with other workers, are well off, but their wives, on whom the health of the children largely depends, have in the past received no instruction in home management, though even given all possible instructions in this respect it is impossible to bring up healthy children in a house with an unpaved common yard and a privy-midden. Infantile mortality will be reduced when the homes of the people are such that the women may be proud of them.