

## THE MATERNITY HOSPITAL

### IVY HOUSE, HACKNEY

This Hospital is one for the accommodation of young mothers on the occasion of the birth of their illegitimate children. It is a humble building, containing twenty-five beds, although I think a few more can be arranged. That it serves its purpose well, until the large Maternity Hospital of which I have already spoken can be built, is shown by the fact that 286 babies (of whom only twenty-five were not illegitimate) were born here in 1900 without the loss of a single mother. Thirty babies died, however, which the lady-Officer in charge thought rather a high proportion, but one accounted for by the fact that during this particular year a large number of the births were premature. In 1908, 270 children were born, of whom twelve died, six of these being premature.

The cases are drawn from London and other towns where the Salvation Army is at work. Generally they, or their relatives and friends, or perhaps the father of the child, apply to the Army to help them in their trouble, thereby, no doubt, preventing many child-murders and some suicides. The charge made by the Institution for these lying-in cases is in proportion to the ability of the patient to pay. Many contribute nothing at all. From those who do pay, the average sum

received is 10s. a week, in return for which they are furnished with medical attendance, food, nursing, and all other things needful to their state.

I went over the Hospital, and saw these unfortunate mothers lying in bed, each of them with her infant in a cot beside her. Although their immediate trial was over, these poor girls looked very sad.

'They know that their lives are spoiled,' said the lady in charge.

Most of them were quite young, some being only fifteen, and the majority under twenty. This, it was explained to me, is generally due to the ignorance of the facts of life in which girls are kept by their parents or others responsible for their training. Last year there was a mother aged thirteen in this Hospital.

One girl, who seemed particularly sad, had twins lying beside her. Hoping to cheer her up, I remarked that they were beautiful babies, whereon she hid her face beneath the bedclothes.

'Don't talk about them,' said the Officer, drawing me away, 'that child nearly cried her eyes out when she was told that there were two. You see, it is hard enough for these poor mothers to keep one, but when it comes to two--!'

I asked whether the majority of these unfortunate young women really

tried to support their children. The answer was that most of them try very hard indeed, and will use all their money for this purpose, even stinting themselves of absolute necessities. Few of them go wrong again after their first slip, as they have learned their lesson.

Moreover, during their stay in hospital and afterwards, the Salvation Army does its best to impress on them certain moral teachings, and thus to make its work preventive as well as remedial.

Places in service are found for a great number of these girls, generally where only one servant is kept, so that they may not be taunted by the others if these should find out their secret. This as a rule, however, is confided to the mistress. The average wage they receive is about £18 a year. As it costs them £13, or 5s. a week, to support an infant (not allowing for its clothes), the struggle is very hard unless the Army can discover the father, and make him contribute towards the support of his child, either voluntarily or through a bastardy order.

I was informed that many of these fathers are supposed to be gentlemen, but when it comes to this matter of payment, they show that they have little title to that description. Of course, in the case of men of humbler degree, money is even harder to recover. I may add, that my own long experience as a magistrate goes to confirm this statement. It is extraordinary to what meanness, subterfuge, and even perjury, a man will sometimes resort, in order to avoid paying so little as 1s. 6d. a week towards the keep of his own child. Often

the line of defence is a cruel attempt to blacken the character of the mother, even when the accuser well knows that there is not the slightest ground for the charge, and that he alone is responsible for the woman's fall.[5] Also, if the case is proved, and the order made, many such men will run away and hide themselves in another part of the country to escape the fulfilment of their just obligations.

In connexion with this Maternity Hospital, the Salvation Army has a Training School for midwives and nurses, all of whom must pass the Central Midwives Board examination before they are allowed to practise. Some of the students, after qualifying, continue to work for the Army in its Hospital Department, and others in the Slum Department, while some go abroad in the service of other Societies. The scale of fees for this four months' course in midwifery varies according to circumstances. The Army asks the full charge of eighteen guineas from those students who belong to, or propose to serve other Societies. Those who intend to go abroad to work with medical missionaries, have to pay fifteen guineas, and those who are members of the Salvation Army, or who intend to serve the Army in this Department, pay nothing, unless, at the conclusion of their course, they decide to leave the Army's service.

At the last examination, out of fourteen students sent up from this Institution, thirteen passed the necessary test.