

## UNMARRIED MOTHERS.

### GALWAY'S CALL FOR NEW LEGISLATION.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.

TUAM, Tuesday.

Subsequent to the abolition of the old workhouses in the county, the Galway County Council, with the approval of the Local Government Department, established the Children's Home at Glenamaddy for the accommodation of unmarried mothers, illegitimate children and destitute orphans within the county. Finding that the locality was unsuitable for many reasons, one being that a sufficient supply of milk was not available for the institution (which, by the way, was formerly used as a workhouse), the inmates were transferred to Tuam, the disused workhouse there being now the Children's Home for the county.

The Home is in charge of the Bon Secour Sisters, with whom the County Homes Committee (consisting of members of the County Council and Board of Health), have entered into a contract for the maintenance of the inmates at the rate of £1 per week for mother and child, and, according to the last monthly returns submitted to the County Homes Committee by the Matron (Sister Hortense), the numbers in the Home were:— Mothers, 30; Children, 125. Total, 155.

The County Homes Committee consider the existing rate too high, and at the next meeting (to be held in Tuam on the first Monday in October) a motion, notice of which stands in the name of Mr. G. Lynch, County Councillor, will come up for consideration, regarding the question of continuing the contract with the Bon Secour Sisters, or terminating it. The estimate adopted for running the Children's Home for the current year was £3,700, and on the 31st March last there were 113 children, of which 86 were illegitimate, and 30 unmarried mothers in the home.

#### BOARD OF HEALTH LETTER.

The last meeting of the County Homes Committee had before it the following letter from the Secretary, Board of Health:—

"The Board of Health meeting on 29th ult. had before them a report from the Hospitals' and Dispensaries' Committee suggesting that some arrangement should be made to provide a maternity ward for unmarried mothers, in conjunction with either the County Home or the Children's Home. It was pointed out that the Maternity Hospital, which was reconstructed at great expense, was primarily intended to accommodate the wives of labourers, artisans, etc., and a room was also set aside for paying patients, but owing to the number of unmarried mothers admitted to that department (54 during the past year), very few of the class for whom the hospital was intended now seek admission. Of course, the dietary scale for the hospital is entirely different to that for the county home, and for provisions alone the difference is about 5s. 6d. per head per week. Further, many unmarried mothers admitted to the central hospital in the first instance have to be transferred to the county home as waiting cases, later on brought back to the Maternity Hospital (Galway), and when fit for discharge conveyed to the Children's Home, thereby costing a considerable sum for ambulance conveyance.

The Board of Health, the letter concluded, are of opinion that the saving which could be effected if a ward was fitted up for unmarried mothers in the Children's Home would practically cover the extra expenditure, and they request your committee to take immediate steps to provide such a ward.

The members present expressed themselves in favour of converting portion of the unoccupied buildings at the Children's Home, Tuam, for the purpose of a maternity ward, and adjourned the matter to next meeting.

The County Homes Committee on the same occasion adopted the following resolution:—

"That we urge upon the Government the necessity for amending the law regarding the unmarried mothers so as to make the putative father of an illegitimate child liable for the cost of the child's maintenance.

"In this county each illegitimate child who becomes a charge upon the poor rate costs £300 from infancy until he or she reaches the age of 15 years, and under this head the debt on the county for last year for fifty-four illegitimate children born during the year in the county and dealt with in the County Institution reaches the enormous total of £16,000. We believe that second offenders should be specially provided for by law, and power should be given to have them committed to a Magdalen asylum or similar institution for a term of years. We earnestly request deputies, regardless of party, to consider this question with a view to the introduction of suitable legislation."

It was ordered that copies of the resolution be sent to the deputies for the county.

3266