

The Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies

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*“He shall gather the lambs with his arm
and carry them in his bosom, and shall
gently lead those that are with young.”*

THE QUARTERLY BULLETIN

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THE KENTUCKY COMMITTEE FOR MOTHERS AND
BABIES

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The Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies, Inc., has held its second meeting, October 9, 1925, at the home of Mrs. S. C. Henning in Cherokee Park, Louisville, and wishes to present an outline of its work during the past four months.

It will be remembered that this Committee formed an organization and held its first meeting in Frankfort, May 28th of this same year, with the declared purpose of safeguarding the lives and health of mothers and young children by providing trained nurse-midwives for rural areas where there are no resident physicians.

This step was taken because, notwithstanding the advanced public health work done in many parts of the United States, which has resulted in the prolongation of human life and greatly decreased mortality from preventable disease, statistics show that our mortality from childbirth is higher than in any other civilized country. The sixteen other countries that have lower death rates have no better medical and nursing service than ours, but they all have what we conspicuously lack, a large body of qualified midwives, trained and supervised. Although we also use midwives for about thirty per cent of our confinements, we have not brought them abreast of the times except in one or two of the large cities. So that while we could not conceive of eighteenth century surgery for our young soldiers, we continue to supply eighteenth century obstetrics to our young mothers, and have lost more women in childbirth in our history as a nation than men on the field of battle, and over a hundred thousand of our youngest and most defenseless citizens pass annually from one dark cradle to another with hardly a gap between.

The Kentucky Committee feels that the same system that has effected such marked reductions in the maternal and infant death rate in other countries, viz: that of substituting trained and supervised midwives for untrained ones, could effectively be used in meeting the needs in our isolated rural areas, especially as carried out in Great Britain with its similar language and traditions. In England the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses had a maternal death rate in 1923 of only 1.4 per thousand, in the 54,554 confinements attended by their nurses—who are trained as midwives—the lowest rate on such a large scale in

the world. Splendid work of this character is also being done under the Scottish Board of Health, in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

At its first meeting the Kentucky Committee pledged itself to a definite program for the summer—which we now report has been carried through.

COUNTY ORGANIZATION

Leslie county, chosen by permission of the State Board of Health for our initial demonstration, has formed a County Branch Committee of ninety-two members, from all sections of its three hundred and seventy-five square miles of rugged highland. Its first meeting, with an attendance of thirty-five members, was held August 22nd at the county seat of Hyden, in the court house, turned over for that purpose during term of court through the courtesy of the district judge. Many had ridden for hours to be present, one woman spending the day in the saddle, going and coming, with her baby over one arm. The court house was jammed to capacity with interested onlookers. Three of the state executive officers, Mrs. Henning, Mrs. Carter and Judge O'Rear, came up to the mountains to open the meeting and welcome the first county branch into our state group. We presented our program in detail and it was accepted on the part of the county in thrilling speeches by Judge I. D. Lewis, of Hyden, J. H. Hart, the county superintendent of schools, Judge Muncey, editor of the weekly "Thousand Sticks", Miss McCord of Wooton, and Miss Zylpha Roberts of Dry Hill. The executive officers were then elected with Judge Wm. Dixon, of Wooton, as chairman. In a set of resolutions, which are appended to this bulletin, presented by Walter Hoskins, of Hyden, and adopted unanimously, the Leslie County Branch Committee pledged its enthusiastic cooperation and support. So that from now on, in our plans as in our aims, we move together.

THE SURVEY

This was placed under the direction of Miss Bertram Ireland, of Scotland, who has been so highly endorsed by Sir Leslie MacKenzie for similar work in the Highlands, and was lent to us for the summer by the Committee on Maternal Health in

New York. In all, six other workers carried on this task under her directions and have just brought it to a close, after covering every inhabited creek and branch in the county, and crossing every inhabited mountain—visiting every house and 1,635 families. The data has just been turned over to the State Board of Health and when Mr. Blackerby and his statisticians have it tabulated we will know, as accurately as it can humanly be determined, the birth and death rate for our unit of ten thousand native born American mountaineers, and more especially the maternal and infant death rate.

It would be hard to exaggerate the difficulties of this survey. Often those making it slept wherever darkness overtook them in rooms crowded with other people, but in homes too hospitable to turn them off after nightfall. Because of the drought and failure of crops there was not the usual variety of food—corn bread and apples being actually the only fare in one cabin—and horses' feed so scarce that in one part of the county we had to have it hauled twenty-five miles from the railroad in advance of our survey. The horses met with many mischances. One worker hitched her horse, Sandy, above a precipice to the only tree and continued an ascent she judged too steep for him, only to turn and see Sandy and the tree disappearing over the mountain together. Another, dismounting at a rough gap, stepped on a long snake, who, liking the contact as little as she, they quickly parted. To her horror she stepped on him again, and then a third time in her hurried retreat, so that, in her own words, she "danced a jubilee on that old snake all the way down the mountain."

MISS IRELAND'S REPORT

....."The mountain county selected to be surveyed (Leslie) measures about 376 square miles, and comprises about 10,000 inhabitants; but the only sure way of understanding the distribution of the population and the nature of the country is by scrutinizing the detailed map issued by the Geological Survey Department a few years ago. On it is marked, with a high degree of accuracy, every contour, river, fork, creek, branch and house. There is no large community in Leslie County, the chief being 300 inhabitants in Hyden (the county seat) and the next

being 100 at Wooton, which means that the bulk of the population is scattered up and down the valleys and on the hillsides. The only means of transport is by horse or muleback riding, mule wagon, or by walking, as roads, bridges, and railways are unknown in the county.

Largely because of such conditions, complete registration of births and deaths has never been achieved, and it was in order to supplement the information obtained during the last fifteen years that the present survey was undertaken. Then on its completion, with the cooperation of the State Board of Health, the data desired by your Committee with regard to the number and causes of deaths among mothers and babies will be available.

As we found, it was quite impossible to estimate with any degree of accuracy, just how long it would take to survey the county. Skilled city census takers, judging largely by the number of families to be seen, thought that it could be done within two months, while the local residents consulted said, either pessimistically, "It is no work for a woman; it is a lifetime job you've got" or optimistically, "Oh, it won't take too long." Very quickly was it realized that, there, the unexpected happens so frequently as to be almost monotonous. It was an unusual day that did not present a special problem, and the heart-easing philosophy and self-protecting humour of the mountaineer were not to be attained by us all at once. We had not learned to say with those who live under the soothing influence of the eternal hills "I'm in no hurry today" and it was only after many such incidents as finding that someone had mistakenly gone off with our horse blankets or even our horses, that the mail wagon had not been able to make room for our anxiously expected equipment, that rain very quickly made our chosen route impassable, or that our and the local ideas of distance were not compatible, that we began to acquire the requisite placidity and balance of spirit. In my first week, there was a "tide" due to flooding, and while it was a highly welcome opportunity for the loggers to get their timber down to market before prices fell during the summer, it confined me on a small island for four days and allowed of not more than half a dozen families being visited. Later owing to shortage of oats, my horse was given a "green feed" which, together with his being out in a severe hail storm the

same day, gave him colic so badly that he could not be ridden for two days. At other times, new horses reckoned on for immediate work, turned up "barefoot," which involved waiting until the soreness had gone before they could be ridden. And it was wonderful how the horses' feet always seemed to need some special attention just where blacksmiths were not. I had been warned that although it was not dangerous were a hind foot shoe to become loose, it was highly dangerous if a front foot shoe lost any of its nails, as the hind foot might catch in the loose front shoe, so you can imagine my feelings while at work one morning, when on hearing a strange noise, I saw half of Rick's right front shoe swinging from his hoof. His feet had been overlooked the day before; it was a very wet morning, the nearest blacksmith was "away to the railroad", and there were two mountains to be crossed before dark. But back we turned, down the stony creek, until a man was found who mended matters with his pocket-knife, some nails and a hammer, using the emergency shoe always carried in the saddle bags.

From my twice having mentioned rain storms, you may think it was a wet season, with rivers and fords running high. On the contrary, it was said to be the driest, hottest summer experienced by living mountaineers, and water for drinking and washing became scarcer every day. Most of the branches and creeks and wells were empty by the time I "came out of" the mountains, and, on my last ride of sixteen miles to the railroad, my horse scorned the stagnant, green water of the Middle Fork. One of the saddest features of the drought, apart from burned up corn and stunted fruit, was the insufficiency of water for the canning of winter supplies. And at the mission center which exchanged clothing for vegetables and fruit (used in its Dormitory) it was feared that the "traders" families might go cold during the winter as they felt they had so little to exchange and were apt, therefore, to discontinue trading.

This feeling of fairness, or nothing for nothing, impressed us as we went about the county. When it became known that there was the probability of an increase in the number of nurses in the county, we were almost embarrassed with offers of land and timber and workers if only we would establish a nursing center "right here on this creek." True enough, it was needed

“right here”, almost everywhere, but all we could say was “eventually, there will be a center for each neighborhood. Meantime will you give us the information that will help to make our plans a success?” And in return for that, we tried to give satisfaction to those who were sufficiently interested to remark “I don’t think I’m acquainted with you, I guess you are a stranger in this country?” “Where do you stay?” or “You don’t look like you were married?” or “Mebbe you get \$100 a month for doing this”; or “Did you ever have to hoe corn?” or “I’ll bet you never carried wood on your back?” Yes, we carried wood, drew water from the well, saddled and groomed our horses and took stones from their shoes, all under the critical eyes of the practised mountaineer, but never quite up to his way of thinking, I imagine!

At this point, it should probably be explained that after about three weeks’ work, it was obvious that I could not complete the survey in the two months at first thought ample. In the first week, the “tide” was accountable for a certain amount of delay, next week the heat made progress slow, and the third week Rick’s colic held me up, but we were learning that similar happenings would have to be reckoned with in future. It seemed advisable, therefore, to seek help if the survey were to be finished during the summer and we were indeed fortunate to meet Miss Zilpha Roberts, a mountain teacher, born in Leslie County, who gladly gave us two months of her time. Miss Roberts has an intimate knowledge of the more remote parts of the county, and is a quick worker, so gave inestimable assistance; but even she, after a few weeks’ continued surveying, practised rider as she is, said that “the next census should be taken by aeroplane and parachute!” But I do not know, with a little experience of both, whether aeroplaning would be any less rough than riding up and down the creeks and branches of Leslie.

“It’s a rough country this, and we’re a poor people, but there ain’t a cleverer on the face of the earth” was a phrase we heard almost daily, and heartily endorsed. With regard to the first part of the phrase, there was no denying it, so far as the traveling was concerned; but, frequently, in conversation, I compared the good fortune of the mountaineers in having such abundance of timber, coal, fruit and sunshine, etc., with that of the Scotch

Island Highlanders, whose existence depends so largely on the season's supply of fish. That drew forth not a few expressions of envy, such as that voiced by a thin, tired, hungry-looking mother who had lost two sets of twins and had a living family of seven, "Oh, I should like that, I haven't had a mess o' fish in years." These mountain people seemed to enjoy hearing of mountaineers of another country and other ways, and I believe I convinced some of them that theirs was not the poor country they felt it to be. To the phrase in regard to their "cleverness" we had nothing but assent. It was apparent that locally the term "clever" retains its old meaning of generous, hospitable, or ready to help, and as I look back on the number of questions we asked (many of them necessarily bringing back sad memories) and on the number of people interrogated, I cannot recall one instance of anything but consideration, patience and helpfulness. (True, I retired hastily from a house where a man approached me while drawing out his hugh pocket knife, but, on looking back, I saw him attacking—a cabbage!) To recall dates—days and months and years—of events covering a period of 15 years is no easy task for anyone, but especially difficult where calendars and diaries and marriage lines and birth certificates and burial permits and newspapers and vacations and even clocks are sufficiently uncommon as to be of little help in marking the passage of time. Where the births and marriages and deaths had been "sot down" in the family Bible (not the one that "had not been used for 10 years") our interviews went along quickly enough, even though each page had to be scrutinized in case of a stray entry; but where some loose sheet of paper or an old notebook or even a store catalog had to be hunted up from a certain old box kept in the depths of a trunk, or when memories had to be relied upon and consultations with the whole assembled family were necessary, we had to try to forget our fear of not getting over the next mountain in daylight. The memory of tales of dark nights when wild cats cast themselves on the heads of tired travelers, or of snakes seen to be slithering along the bridle paths, always plagued me on such occasions! But sooner or later, the details wanted were forthcoming and the forms supplied by the State Board of Health were duly filled, and the interview invariably closed with the invitation "don't be in no hurry,

I'll fix you a bit o' dinner and then you'll make the night with us." Many a time, the invitation was gladly accepted, and, on other occasions, the non-acceptance was excused only on our explaining that the more speed we made, the sooner the county would have its new nurse-midwives. I shall never forget the quiet spontaneity and cordiality with which I was treated, especially on one occasion. I had attempted to cross a mountain by a path unmarked on the map and known only to those living near. After repeated directions I missed the path twice, once in time to return to get renewed instructions, but the second time, several miles from any habitation. Fallen trees were everywhere, the mountain was steep and stony, and a snake fence seemed to surround me. The branches were so low and so thick that I had to dismount, and lead the horse, and, oh! the spiders' webs and hissing in the grass! On and on we wandered until, most reluctantly, I decided to try to retrace my steps so as to gain the valley path; but that was easier said than done, and, to add to my feeling of fallen pride, I let a branch swing back very hard hitting the horse in the eyes. Poor Rick, however, took that blow as patiently as he took all my other amateur handling, and soon after we turned to go back, the path in the right direction became apparent. So down we went, until we came to a house where I was only too glad to comply with the hospitable greeting "git down, come in and git ye a char, I'll hitch your nag". Then followed much kindly conversation. I was given a hearty meal and the horse had food and his eyes bathed—all of which cheered and refreshed us and made us entirely fit to "carry on."

Towards the end of July, Miss Caffin and Miss Rockstroh, the Committee's first nurses who are to be stationed in Leslie County, joined us and at once consented to help with the survey before beginning their own particular work. Unfortunately, it was necessary to ask this of them; but the statistics sought were required partly as a basis for their activities, and partly as a basis for their location, as, by means of the survey, it was possible to judge of the most necessitous districts, of the most appropriate sites for the first nursing centers, and of the existing disease and death conditions. Numbers of families within a certain area, facilities for reaching these, distance from railroad, availability of good water, all were noted and considered,

and will weigh with the Committee in its decisions. By this time, the whole county was interested in the proposed scheme and everyone was eager to give assistance. One of the most immediately valuable offers came from Miss McCord, Head of the Presbyterian Board for Home Missions' Community House at Wooton, who generously loaned two of her workers and two of her horses for a week to take the census of Beech Fork. A very considerable area was covered by these two workers, and we have every reason to be grateful to Miss McCord and to them. Of all those six then engaged on the survey, it was probably hardest on the nurses—the reason being that they most quickly recognized sickness and suffering which, however, they were powerless to alleviate. They carried few remedies, it was not the time for them to work professionally, and, in many cases, "follow-up" visits were necessary (but impossible) to bring about desired results. But it was perfectly wonderful how they managed to give advice, bandage sores, bathe wounds and suggest procedure while traveling rapidly from one house to another gathering statistics.

Until the final results are prepared by the State Statisticians, it is impossible to give anything but the most general facts as to the health conditions in the county. It was obvious, however, that malnutrition, anaemia, hookworm, tuberculosis, typhoid, and other diseases have to be contended with all the time, that serious accidents happen fairly frequently, and that there is immense need for more general knowledge on the subject of hygiene and sanitation. Leslie County is blessed with invaluable material resources; its people are possessed of unique hereditary advantages. In many ways, time has passed them by. That cannot persist. The outer world is encroaching; the automobile is approaching; the railroad is nearing; the mail is more frequent. The people of Leslie County are aware of all this and only too anxious to cooperate with the Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies in its effort to ensure for them a healthy, happy progeny to perpetuate their high ideals and deep love for home and country, and to equip the mountaineer for his coming encounter with industrial competition.

(Signed)

W. BERTRAM IRELAND."

THE FIRST CENTERS OF NURSE-MIDWIFERY

Aside from its primary purpose, that of providing us with reliable data, "in order that the value of our service in terms of human life might be established," the survey has given us an insight into county conditions as a whole, a knowledge of our county as a unit and in detail, which we could in no other way so quickly have attained. This, while it gives a clearer perspective, and will help us in distributing our nursing centers, brings added difficulties. Now, we not only know our county, but our county knows us—and we are so few, in our veriest beginnings, that the demands made upon us are quite beyond our numbers to meet.

On September first we opened our first nursing center at Hyden, in the only empty house there, rented to us by the courtesy of the Presbyterian School, and, as the survey was not complete, we decided not to look for work during that month, only to take up what fell in our way. By the close of the month Miss Caffin had booked 20 confinements, of which 4 were delivered during the month, and some of the others registered as far ahead as February. In one case we were called in for a post-partum hemorrhage by an old native midwife, who has treated us with great courtesy and is now referring cases to us.

The total number of patients to visit the center, during this month of September when patients were unsolicited, was 233, paying in all 561 visits. Patients treated at the dispensary numbered 89, making 192 visits at which treatments were given. Visits paid in the home were 164 to 46 patients. Of these visits 13 were ante partum, and 29 post natal. School children registered were 49, 32 pre-school and 12 babies. Dressings given adults were 50 and 41 to children. Typhoid inoculations reached 65 for 30 adults and 304 for 114 children. These inoculations, with serum supplied by the State Board of Health, were done at their request to meet a condition endemic in the mountains, and they are growing immensely popular, the high water mark having been reached one afternoon when Miss Caffin gave 83 hypodermics. We are now trying to popularize toxin-antitoxin and smallpox vaccine. In a county where there is no doctor, prevention is more than ever the life-saver.

We have brought four children down out of the mountains to Louisville and Lexington, on passes furnished by Mr. Jouett of our Committee. Two of them are surgical and have been placed, through the kindness of Dr. Barrow, in the Woolfolk Barrow memorial room at St. Joseph's Hospital in Lexington, one in the medical service at the same hospital, and the fourth, (a baby covered with boils and at the lowest ebb) in her own home by one of our committee, with a special nurse, until his recovery.

Our second center opens on Wolf Creek this October, with Miss Rockstroh in charge and a local group in cooperation. Two other public health nurses, now taking midwifery training in England, come to us in March—and we can permit ourselves further extension. Always the request for us is coupled with offers of help—with a longing to give in return for what is gotten out of all proportion to the per capita wealth of the people. On two of her deliveries Miss Caffin was paid the full fee of five dollars before she left the house—and many have already offered their subscriptions.

OUR OBJECTIVES

It is well to keep in mind that we are embarking on a piece of research—and to advance at the outset a few questions which our adventure must answer—or fail.

1. Will our maternal and infant death rate in rural sections of Kentucky be lowered by this system of nurse-midwives to figures comparable with those of the old world?

2. What area and population can be served by each nurse, combining midwifery with generalized public health nursing? and what part of her time is claimed by midwifery? What part by generalized nursing? We are keeping very exact daily records in order to answer this.

3. What will the cost be? And what part can be borne locally? In the Hebrides of Scotland, with its somewhat similar population and economic conditions, it was found that about 20 per cent of the costs could be borne locally—in other parts of the Highlands as high as 80 per cent.

4. Will the people accept it? Will the nurses do it? These questions we are answering already.

5. Is it economically possible to provide for this service and from what sources other than local support? Educational work is largely met by endowments. Perhaps we are coming to an era when health will be as well endowed as education.

6. Can this service extend indefinitely with nurses only? Or must the nurses eventually be used for the supervision of small groups and a class of mid-wife-attendant trained to work under them? Time will tell.

FINANCE

Private donations have launched us. But we are now asking for many subscriptions, small and large, and for donations to an Endowment Fund of \$500,000.00. We also suggest gifts of nursing centers, which may be memorials, to house our work in different parts of the county. "Wendover" on the Middle Fork, in the center of the county, the headquarters for the service, is now being built. But our quarters at Hyden and on Wolf Creek are temporary, and unoccupied houses suited to our needs, almost unobtainable. We think that many will be glad to memorialize their loved ones by building these nursing centers, where the lives and health of young children and their mothers, of our old American stock, may be safeguarded. We will welcome correspondence to this end.

RESOLUTIONS

Passed by the Leslie County Branch of The Kentucky Committee
for Mothers and Babies at Its Opening Meeting
at Hyden, August 22, 1925.

1. That the name of this association shall be the Leslie County Branch of the Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies.

2. That its purpose is to cooperate with the Kentucky Committee in safeguarding the lives and health of mothers and young children in Leslie county by furthering the provision, and helping the work, of the trained nurse-midwives of the Committee.

3. That these nurse-midwives shall work under supervision; in compliance with the Regulations for Midwives of the State Board of Health, and the law governing the registration of Nurses in Kentucky; and in cooperation with the nearest medical service, and shall keep accurate records of their work.

3. That the Leslie County Branch shall have reciprocal membership with the Kentucky Committee.

5. That it shall consist of not more than 100 members, appointed from all sections of the county, a quorum of which may be twelve or more, that it shall meet on call of its chairman at least twice yearly, to receive the report of the Director of the service of nurse-midwives and transact such other business as may require its attention; that it shall issue a printed yearly report for its own use and to present to the Kentucky Committee; that its officers shall consist of a chairman, three vice-chairmen, and the chairmen of the district committees ex-officio, a treasurer and a secretary, elected at the autumn meeting, the terms to expire at the following autumn meeting and upon the election of their successors; that its new members shall be nominated by the chairman and confirmed by the committee.

6. That the duty of the chairman shall be to call meetings and preside at them, nominate members and, at his discretion,

sub-committees to transact special pieces of business, and such other duties as may properly belong to his position; that the duties of the vice-chairmen shall be to act as chairman in the absence or illness or incapacity of the chairman; that the duties of the treasurer shall be to receive and handle, as hereinafter set forth, all funds collected by or given to the Leslie County Branch or the district committees; that the duties of the secretary shall be to keep the minutes of the meetings, conduct the correspondence of the Leslie County Branch, prepare the annual report and transact such other business as may properly be referred to him (her). That any vacancy among the officers shall be filled by appointment by the chairman until a meeting of the committee, when it shall be filled by the committee; a vacancy in the office of the chairman shall be filled by the senior acting vice-chairman until the next meeting of the committee.

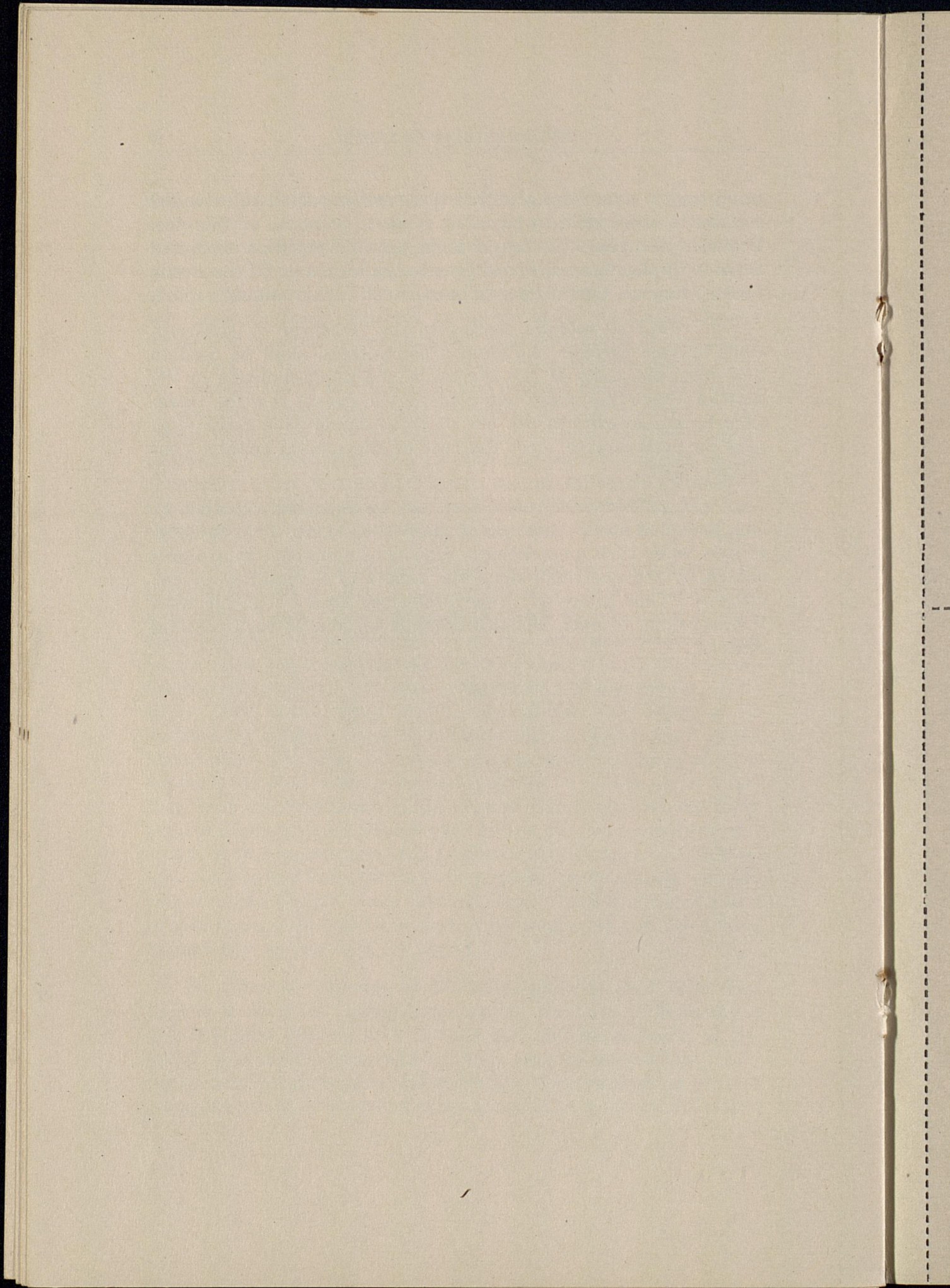
7. That there shall be formed in each territory served by a nurse-midwife a District Committee consisting of such members of the Leslie County Branch as reside therein; that it shall meet monthly to hear the report of its own nurse-midwife and advise with her regarding the needs of the district; that its officers shall consist of but two—a chairman and a secretary, elected by itself, that it shall once a year canvass each house of its district for subscriptions of not less than a dollar from every householder who uses, or expects to use, or who wishes to help support, his own nursing service, payable in money or in kind; that these subscriptions shall be acknowledged on a printed form kept in duplicate, and turned over by the district committee secretary to the treasurer of the Leslie County Branch Committee, who shall keep a list of them to be included in the annual printed report of the Leslie County Branch; that where the subscription is paid in produce it shall be sold at current rates and the money turned over as provided for above.

8. That the services of the nurse-midwife shall otherwise be free to the public using them, except for a fee of \$5.00 for a delivery case (which shall include care before delivery, at delivery, and daily visits with nursing care of mother and child for at least 10 days after delivery) and for the nursing care at a major operation when the nurse is called on to assist a licensed

practitioner. Provided also that these services shall be extended equally to those able to pay only a part, or none, of this fee. Provided also that such fees shall be acknowledged on a printed form in duplicate, and turned over to the treasurer of the Leslie County Branch Committee, to be included in his annual report.

9. That all moneys coming to the treasurer by subscriptions or fees through the district committees, shall be used to help meet the costs of the service of the nurse-midwife in the district where the money was contributed, except that the treasurer be empowered to use out of these funds such moneys as may be necessary to meet the cost of the annual county committee report.

10. That these resolutions may be amended, repealed, or supplemented at any meeting of the Leslie County Branch Committee, when such amendments, repeals or supplements are presented by the chairman upon the report of a majority of the officers. That copies of these resolutions shall be on file with the secretary of each District Committee, and at each nursing center.



C. N. MANNING, Treasurer
SECURITY TRUST CO.
Lexington, Ky.

.....192.....

Dear Sir:

I herewith enclose \$..... for the Kentucky Committee
for Mothers and Babies, Incorporated.

Signed

Address

C. N. MANNING, Treasurer
SECURITY TRUST CO.
Lexington, Ky.

.....192.....

Dear Sir:

I hereby donate \$..... to the Endowment Fund of the
Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies, Incorporated.

Signed

Address

