

The Nursing Conference at St. George's Hall, Mount St., W.

THE SESSION ON MATERNITY NURSING.

The Hall was filled to overflowing for the Conference on Maternity Nursing on the evening of Nov. 23rd, when Dr. Champneys, Chairman of the Central Midwives' Board, presided, and Dr. W. J. Gow, Obstetric Physician to Out-Patients, St. Mary's Hospital, presented a paper on Maternity Nursing. He was followed by Miss Amy Hughes, General Superintendent of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses, and Dr. W. S. A. Griffith, Assistant Obstetric Physician, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, E.C.

In his opening remarks Dr. Champneys said that many of the ills of adult life were caused by bad care at its outset. The future of a child depended much on those who had the care of it for the first few weeks. It was thus necessary that nurses should be thoroughly instructed in the care of the body, and that they should understand aseptic treatment. In this connection imagination was necessary. He remembered one of the pioneers in antiseptic surgery putting into his mouth the needle with which he was going to stitch up the wound after an abdominal section. When he (the speaker), drew the attention of the operator to the fact that this was hardly in accordance with his well known views he was much obliged, and removed it.

Without imagination it was impossible to grasp aseptic principles. It was most essential that maternity nurses should be impressed with their importance, and conscientiously practise them.

In following her calling he thought the maternity nurse had harder work than any other class of worker. A midwifery case entailed much work, and then the nurse had charge of two patients, both day and night. Her rest was continually broken, and as soon as the patient was convalescent she went off to another case to begin the same thing over again. She never forgot the little life which had been her charge during its first few weeks of existence. The qualities of a nurse could be partly tested by ordinary methods. Some qualities such as conscientiousness, unselfishness, and absolute truthfulness, could only be tested by observance of a nurse at her work. If a nurse were to reach the high-water mark of tact, trustworthiness, and unselfishness, she must acquire them early in life. She must learn to apply these principles to the practical performance of her duties by contact with the Matron of her training school. The amount of good that a high-principled Matron in a lying-

in hospital could do in inculcating high standard was incalculable, without high ideals she could do infinite harm.

Meetings such as the present one, helped to keep up the standard of nursing. Dr. Champneys concluded by hoping that the Conference would do good to the great profession of nursing to which those present belonged.

THE EDUCATION OF THE MATERNITY NURSE

By W. J. Gow, M.D.

I have in the first instance to thank the promoters and organisers of this Conference for the honour they have done me, by inviting me to read a short paper here to-night on the education of the maternity nurse.

I have not attempted to deal with this subject in detail because in the first place such a plan would be dull, and in the second place I am not properly qualified to speak about certain portions of the training through which the pupil has to pass. I propose, therefore, to offer for your consideration certain scattered reflections founded on the observation of the raw material as well as the finished product.

By a maternity nurse I mean one who acts as nurse to a woman during the lying-in period, attends upon the baby, and gives the doctor such assistance as he may require during the course of labour. The term monthly nurse often used as synonymous with this, is not a very expressive or a very dignified one, as it only indicates the usual time for which such a nurse is engaged and suggests only very indirectly the nature of her duties.

Education and educational methods have been so much in the air during the last quarter of a century that it is no wonder that a demand for a properly-trained maternity nurse has arisen. No so very long ago the persons engaged in this class of work were mainly respectable middle-aged or elderly women, preferably married, who had had no special training or experience in the subject, except such as had been derived from the bringing up of their own babies or from assisting in a neighbourly fashion, when their friends were in difficulties. Specimens of this class of women are still to be met with even in the houses of the wealthy, and are usually described as being "so good with the baby." They are generally large so-called motherly-looking women and often possess the most astounding capacity for doing without sleep. Some of them possess undoubted virtues although their ideas of antiseptics do not generally rise above sprinkling Sanitas on the carpet. We may put aside these, however, as relics of the past.

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