

The Order of Merit.

Not only the nursing profession, but all women wherever the name of Florence Nightingale is known, will rejoice that the King has shown his appreciation of her work and genius by appointing her to the Order of Merit. Considerable disappointment was felt when his Majesty founded the Order in 1902, that Miss Nightingale's name was not then included, and it is matter for congratulation that she has received this token of her Sovereign's recognition of her unique work while still able to appreciate the honour which has been bestowed upon her.

Miss Nightingale's name is most generally associated with her splendid services to the sick and wounded soldiers in the Crimean



MISS FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

War. Before the eyes of the whole world she there brought order out of chaos, and demonstrated that the care of the sick is woman's work, and that just so far as the necessary authority and power to carry it out are entrusted to her will it be successful.

But Miss Nightingale did much more than retrieve the national honour in regard to the care of the sick in the Crimea. She laid down principles of nursing which will hold good for all time. She has been in the front rank in the promotion of sanitary reform, and a keen supporter of women's suffrage.

The Present Conditions of Infant Life and their Meaning.

The second of the series of lectures on Babies, given at the Infants' Hospital, Vincent Square, W., was delivered by Dr. Ralph Vincent on Tuesday, November 26th. Introducing the subject of the Present Conditions of Infant Life and Their Meaning, the lecturer said that there is often a want of proportion and balance in their discussion, and it is essential to differentiate between essentials and non-essentials.

There are two aspects from which to regard the infant mortality. In the case of infants suffering from specific disease, congenital deformities, such as spina bifida, etc., however regrettable the mortality, such infants are better dead. But there are also the infants who are born healthy, and who are capable of normal development in a healthy environment. The lecturer stated that as resident medical officer at Queen Charlotte's Hospital, where three-fourths of the mothers are unmarried, many come from homes where they have done heavy laundry work. They are often anæmic, and show signs of weakness and exhaustion, such as albuminuria. It might be supposed that the children of such mothers would be affected. But what is the condition of those infants? The majority are perfectly healthy and vigorous.

The evidence of Dr. Eichholz before the Royal Commission on National Deterioration also showed how small was the percentage of unhealthy births, even in the poorest neighbourhoods. He estimated the healthy births at probably 90 per cent. Dr. Vincent said the experience of others whom he had consulted is much the same. In no case are the infants of the unhealthy badly nourished. It almost appears as if the unborn child fights strenuously for its own health at the expense of that of its mother. The relation of the unborn child to the mother may be likened to that of the fungus to the tree. The latter may suffer, the former does not.

Of the registered deaths of infants in 1900: 68,820 died in the first three months of life; from three to six months, 30,283; from six to twelve, 43,809; from one to two years, 37,240. Granting that the figures in the first three months include the congenitally defective, who are better dead, the figures are appalling. There is no question that the cause of the high rate of infant mortality is to be found in the absence of proper food.

Of 2,335 Board School children examined in 1903, more than half suffered from rickets.

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