

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,044.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 1908.

Vol. XL.

Editorial.

INFANTILE MORTALITY PROBLEMS.

The conclusions arrived at by the National Conference on Infantile Mortality, held at the Caxton Hall last week, were embodied in a series of resolutions in which the Conference urged: (1) the importance of the adoption of the Notification of Births Act, 1907, and the appointment of qualified women to carry out its provisions; (2) the importance of securing to girls in every grade of school a satisfactory training in domestic and personal hygiene and in the duties of womanhood; (3) the injury done to infant life and health through infants being taken into public-houses and the necessity of legislation to prevent this; (4) that the Children's Bill be amended so as to empower local authorities to charge upon the rates the cost of carrying out the existing statutory provisions for the prevention of cruelty to children; (5) that Boards of Guardians should make greater use of existing powers to adopt the children of incorrigible parents; (6) that all preparations offered or sold as food or drugs for infants should be certified by a Government analyst as non-injurious; (7) that the Midwives' Act of 1902 should be extended to Scotland and Ireland; (8) that in view of the unsatisfactory conditions under which milk is produced and distributed, immediate amendment of the law is necessary; and, lastly, the Conference resolved "that this Conference shall continue as a Committee to give effect to the foregoing resolutions, with power to remit to an Executive Committee to carry out the same."

The resolutions adopted, together with the papers read, and the discussions which took place at the Conference, show that the national conscience is at last being seriously aroused to the terrible wastage of infant life which for far too long has been prevalent.

Many suggestions were made to the Conference with the view of dealing with the questions which confronted it.

Alderman Broadbent, of Huddersfield, whose term of office as Mayor will always be associated with his work for the prevention of infantile mortality, suggested that the whole work in connection with infantile mortality, particularly that of giving instruction to mothers, should be carried out by the public health authorities through the department of the Medical Officer of Health.

Miss Francis Zanetti, inspector under the Infant Life Protection Act for the Chorlton Union, expressed the opinion that Boards of Guardians should be empowered to check as far as possible the multiplication of the unfit, and as guardians of the poor should have full authority to protect the children of neglectful, incapable, and degenerate persons. She advocated the detention of persons unfit for parentage, and a more energetic supervision of all children placed out to nurse as not only desirable but absolutely necessary to combat the growth of the unfit and the deplorable loss of infant life.

Dr. Hope, Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool, spoke of the great value of visiting the homes of the poor and giving supervision and kindly encouragement to mothers; and Dr. Stanley Atkinson, in a paper on "The Care of Children Neglected by Drunken Parents," expressed the opinion that the rights of the father and mother had been for too long exclusively urged in connection with questions affecting little children, and that resolute and drastic action in the case of a few hundred notoriously neglectful and drunken parents would have a most beneficial effect.

The ventilation of these and kindred subjects cannot fail to be of benefit in drawing public attention to the many problems connected with infantile mortality.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)