

The Midwife.

A NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INFANT WELFARE.

THE RACIAL POISONS AND THE RACIAL PROSPECT.

The Afternoon Session of the first day (July 1st) of the National Conference on Infant Welfare, at the Kingsway Hall, W.C., was devoted to discussion of Racial Poisons and the Racial Prospect. The Chairman, Sir Malcolm Morris, K.C.V.O., F.R.C.S.E., voiced the need for proper instruction of medical students in venereal diseases, so that they might be able to recognise the earliest symptoms. He disliked new laws, but hoped to see satisfactory Health Certificates tendered by contracting parties before marriage. Make the Standard of Health *fashionable* and the problem of the Ministry of Health was solved. New laws were unnecessary: educate the public by the spoken word, the written word, the cinema, raise public opinion.

Dr. C. W. Saleeby (London) pointed out that Syphilis was the most dangerous poison to the unborn generation, and laid stress on the increasing prevalence of Venereal Disease in this country. He had just returned from America, where he had seen most interesting experiments on animals by the inhalation of *alcohol*, the result was destruction of the germ cells. The 50 per cent. reduction of drunken women overlying children was an improvement, but he viewed with dismay the return to the pre-war use of alcohol. The question of Notification of Venereal Disease was raised; the importance for the *sake of the child* was pressed by Dr. Buchan (M.O.H. Bradford), who pointed out that Ophthalmia Neonatorum was notifiable, but surely it was more important to notify the antecedent condition and prevent it. Dr. Waller urged that the unrestricted use of patent foods constituted a racial poison and that medical papers should combine and refuse to advertise articles known to be deleterious to the true health of the community.

Instruction of mothers, and children, Constructive Morality, said Miss Marsh, was necessary to eradicate the evil. The M.O.H. Sheffield upheld this view and advocated the early instruction of the child in the story of life. The Society of Friends and the Jews regarded this instruction as incumbent on parents; they were morally our superiors, yet there was a society for converting the Jews!

THE WORK OF THE MIDWIFE IN RELATION TO ANTE-NATAL AND NEO-NATAL MORTALITY.

The chairman on Wednesday morning was Sir Francis Champneys, Bart., M.D., F.R.C.P. (chair-

man Central Midwives Board). The subject for discussion was "The Work of the Midwife in Relation to Ante and Neo-natal Mortality." Papers were read by Dr. Fairbairn (London), Miss Olive Haydon (London) and Miss Burnside, O.B.E. (Herts.). Dr. Fairbairn suggested that as ante-natal work had been so long neglected, now that its importance was recognised it was perhaps too much magnified—it must settle into its proper sphere. A scheme of post-graduate work for midwives was outlined, the practising midwife must be fitted for the additional services now called for before and after labour. To insure the success of the post-graduate classes the question of subsidy comes in. The Public Health Service must be *Team Work*, with places for doctors, nurses and midwives. Dr. Fairbairn dwelt on the necessity of Centres, realising that the patient belonged to the midwife from the time of booking, and that this point must not be overlooked if full co-operation of the midwife were to be enlisted and ultimate good result.

Miss Olive Haydon emphasised the need for further research work in connection with ante and neo-natal mortality. Midwives desire the examination of stillborn infants, and the post-mortem examination of infants dying during their attendance. Attention was drawn to the difficulty of bearing and rearing healthy children in slum homes by unfit parents. Miss Haydon deprecated the too frequent use of forceps to hasten *normal labour* and hoped that with improved ante-natal observation, a growing respect for and patience with the Natural forces in labour, the realisation of the dangers of high forcep operations, and the increased safety of Cæsarian Section, fewer infants would die during birth or be born injured. Increased normal labours diminish infant mortality.

Miss Burnside urged midwives to take advantage of post-graduate classes, and the removal of the handy woman still practising under the medical wing—her retention is a menace to the country and deterrent to good women taking up midwifery. The question was raised in discussion of the advisability of midwives undertaking general nursing when labour cases are scarce. There is undoubtedly too much general nursing undertaken by women with insufficient training. The scarcity of educated practising midwives was deplored; the remuneration offered to such women is, of course, the cause, though Public Health Authorities seem slow to grasp the fact. Medical registers similar to those kept by midwives were suggested as a means of throwing light on infant mortality; such registers would be open to inspection by the Ministry of Health.

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