

The Central Poor Law Conference.

At the thirtieth annual Central Poor Law Conference which was held at the Guildhall of the City of London last week, many subjects of practical interest in relation to poor law administration were discussed. Lord Cross, in his presidential address dealt mainly with the housing question. He advised his hearers to confine themselves for the present to the endeavour, persistently and perseveringly, to induce local authorities to exercise the powers already conferred upon them rather than to work for further legislation.

Infant Life Protection.

Mrs. W. L. Brodie-Hall, a guardian of the Eastbourne Union contributed a paper on "The Infant Life Protection Act (1891) Amendment Bill 1901," which was read by Dr. Rhodes of Manchester, in which she strongly advocated the extension of the provisions of the Act to cases in which only one child was received; and moving a resolution on the subject. The directly opposite view was expressed in a paper contributed by Mrs. Roberts Peel Wethered, representing the London Diocesan Council for Rescue and Preventive Work, and Mrs. Henniker, a guardian of the Fulham Union, who held that such an extension of the Act would lead to the almost certain loss of the best form of infant home, to the increased aggregation of infants, and that increased desertion, abortion, and even infanticide were likely to result, and that while such a law would hamper good work it would be evaded by the people with whom it was meant to deal. As the result of a division, 168 votes were given in favour of the resolution, and 68 against it. It was, therefore, carried.

Poor Law and Friendly Societies.

The Rev. J. F. Wilkinson (President of the National Conference of Friendly Societies) read a paper on "Friendly Societies and Poor Law Administration," in which he endeavoured to define the respective spheres of friendly societies and Poor Law operations in the economic and social field. The Rev. F. G. Clutterbuck (Chairman of the Abingdon Union) followed with a paper expressing opposite views to those held by Mr. Wilkinson.

Poor Law and Charity.

Dr. J. C. Wright (Chairman of the Grimsby Union) contributed a paper on "Poor Law and Charity," and was followed by Mr. W. A. Bailward (Bethnal Green Union) on the same subject. In the discussion which followed, Miss S. Lonsdale (Lichfield) said that the great danger of the present day was a tendency to ignore the capability of the poor to arrange their own affairs. When left to their own resources they managed very well. The work of charity was to alleviate the stress of poverty. It could work side by side with the Poor Law if permitted to do so.

The Nursing Difficulty in Provincial Unions.

Of chief interest from a nursing point of view was the paper of Mr. F. R. Humphreys, L.R.C.P., on the above subject. He advocated the removal of the sick poor from the smaller infirmaries to large centrally situated institutions, and suggested a scheme of district hospitals for the whole country which should be under the general control of a board of nursing, medical, and poor law experts, the actual management being vested in a Committee of the Board of Guardians concerned. The proposal was not received with general favour.

Professional Review.

ARTIFICIAL FEEDING AND FOOD DISORDERS OF INFANTS.

We have received from Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co. a copy of the above book, the price of which is 5s. Dr. Cheadle's position as consulting physician to the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, and his long connection with this institution are sufficient guarantee of the weight of his opinions, and the book, although primarily intended for medical students, contains much information of great practical value to nurses. As the author points out, for one cause or another, the question of the artificial feeding of infants has constantly to be faced, and "a large proportion of the diseases of early life—some of the most fatal and some of the most lasting in their influence—have their origin in errors of diet; and the dieting at this period is one which largely affects the whole future of the child.

THE MATERIALS REQUIRED.

Dr. Cheadle clearly explains the reasons for the absorption of nourishment, inasmuch as the body requires a constant supply of materials for the repair of structures which are undergoing constant and unceasing change, for the supply of secretions requisite for vital functions, and also for fuel to be burnt in the body, for the generation of heat, and of force or energy for every movement, action or operation of organic life. In children materials are also needed for another purpose, namely, the structure and development of new parts. In adults existing tissues need to be kept in repair; this need is the same with children, but they also require material for making the new tissues of growing structures, and thus require certain materials in larger proportion than adults.

Most nurses know that the essential elements of food may be divided into five classes:—

1. The nitrogenous elements, the chief of which are the albumenates or proteids, found most largely in animal foods.
2. The hydrocarbons or fats.
3. The carbo-hydrates, such as starch and sugar.
4. Mineral elements, such as salts of lime, especially the phosphate and carbonate, potash, soda, and iron.
5. Water.

It is more important for a child even than for an adult that its food should contain all these elements. That of fat is of the very highest importance. It is wanted for the generation of heat and energy, for every tissue formed and forming, for brain and nerve cells, and for the marrow cells. Deficiency of fat is one of the chief factors in the production of rickets. A principle too often overlooked in an infant's artificial diet is, we are told, that it should contain a due proportion of animal matter. "Milk, the type food, is entirely animal. Animal tissues are probably most easily formed from animal materials, and little children brought up on vegetable food alone are often soft, flabby, anæmic, rickety, and, if the food is solely farinaceous, scorbutic. Yet most artificial foods are entirely vegetable."

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS OF INFANT FEEDING.

The essential conditions to be observed in the diet of infants are summed up by the author as follows:—

- I. The food must contain the different elements in the proportions which obtain in human milk.
- II. It must possess the anti-scorbutic element.

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