

Annotations.

QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S MILITARY NURSING SERVICE.

The Director-General of the Army Medical Service (Surgeon-General A. Keogh, C.B.) has intimated to General Officers Commanding that it is considered desirable that Matrons or Acting Matrons of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service should keep a permanent record of all the Sisters and Staff Nurses of the Nursing Service, and also of the Army Nursing Service Reserve members, who are serving under them in each hospital. The record is to contain the names of the members of the nursing staff, and the addresses of nearest relatives; also any special qualifications they may possess, such as ability to lecture, to train orderlies in massage, electricity, and the light treatment, or to nurse special diseases of women and children or midwifery cases, and also the dates of ordinary and sick leave and of commencing and ending night duty.

THE INFANT AT BIRTH.

Dr. E. G. McDowell delivered an interesting lecture on Thursday in last week at the Institute of Hygiene on "The Infant at Birth: its Physiology, Care and Management."

The lecturer referred to the paucity of literature bearing on the physiology of infancy and childhood. He impressed upon his hearers the necessity of using such practical information as was known to us to the best advantage, because upon this we must rely if the infant is to escape the evil influences that surround him at the present time. It is not generally allowed, he said, that most babes are born perfectly healthy; yet this is so, for Nature has not only a wonderful way of pinching out an undesirable strain, but also a tendency to adjustment in all her processes. Those who enter life burdened with hereditary taint, and those who are physically or mentally decrepit at birth are, after all, comparatively few. What then is the cause of so much mortality during the first years of life, when no less than about 15 per cent. of those born cease to exist? The mother has the experience of ages crystallised into maternal instinct. Why should she err in the bringing up of her offspring? Nevertheless she does, and it is this fact which calls for the admonition to go back to Nature. Study the child's physiological conditions, and learn his requirements. Take him to pieces, as it were, and see how he is made.

There are many characteristics in which he differs from the adult; his skeleton lacks phosphates, and the bones are softer, more pliable, and less liable to fracture—their development opening the door for bad management to make itself felt in the production of rickets, curvature of the spine, and other bone diseases set up by improper feeding. The skull of an infant is made up of separate bones, held together by the membrane in which they grow, and deficient in places altogether.

The lecturer, in speaking of the special senses at birth, pointed out that sight and hearing are defective to a degree that might greatly surprise the mother if she were allowed to find it out for herself in the case of her own young babe. The infant is able to detect the presence of a strong light and to differentiate between light and darkness, but it cannot see its mother's face for some weeks. The recognition of colours comes only after a few months. He first distinguishes yellow, red, pure white, grey, and black, while green and blue come later. Taste is evident at birth, but hearing is not sufficiently developed for him to do more than hear his own cry.

The importance of the proper development of the brain was appealed to as a fact that should prevent a child from being sent to school at an early age. The children of the poorer classes are, oftener than not, sent to school at the age of three, when they should be living the freest possible outdoor life. A child's brain loves activity, but it should work in its own way—not at the behest of taskmasters, who fix his attention for long periods, and compel steady application. Dr. Jacobi, of New York—a recognised authority—has maintained that no child should commence studies till it is nine years of age.

One of the strongest points insisted upon was the avoidance of adventitious feeding soon after birth, and the advisability of depending upon the food provided by Nature.

It was shown that Nature actually goes out of her way to make a special kind of milk for the infant's first few meals to suit his temporary needs, but that it was an all too common thing to find Nature forestalled by ignorance, and the child dosed with a confection of traditional veneration and misplaced respect—butter and sugar.

The final remark of the lecturer was to the effect that those who disregarded the ways of Nature in bringing up their children go out to meet sorrow, and generally have not far to go.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)