

The Royal Sanitary Institute's Congress at Cardiff.

SECOND PAPER.

It was in the Women's Conference on Hygiene that the following delightful story was told:—A teacher had found fault with little Jane in school for the dirty state of her face and hands, and mentioned the smell proceeding from her entire body. On the child's return to school after the dinner hour, she brought with her the following note from her mother:—

"Miss —, I never sez as how my child was a Rose I sends er to scool to be larned not smelled."

And it was here also that we were reminded of Principal Griffiths' dictum that many people fancied the word Hygiene denoted a mysterious kind of underclothes.

To speak frankly, the Women's Conference was not entirely the success that we could have wished it to be. The admission of men to the Conference was a fundamental mistake, preventing much useful discussion, such as should take place where women of intellect and experience are gathered together, but which can only do so *in camerâ*, since the most intimate subjects of life and health are to be dealt with.

Again, too, writers of papers were absent; and, finally, several of the papers were of too elementary a character to be presented on such an occasion.

Notwithstanding this, there was some excellent discussion, provoked by the elementary as well as the more thorough papers. Mrs. Ashburner's account of the Ladies' Public Health Society of Manchester and Salford, Dr. Erie Evans' "Influence of Parentage upon Infantile Mortality," and Dr. Jane Walker's "Industrial Aspect of Tuberculosis," redeemed the situation by their lucidity of detail and sustained interest.

INFANT MORTALITY.

Dealing with Infant Mortality, it is with regret that we find England seventh highest out of fifteen countries in the deaths of her baby citizens, Scotland coming tenth, and Ireland twelfth on the list. New Zealand, with the lowest rate, has 80 infant deaths per thousand births, as against Russia, the highest, with 272, and ourselves with 150.

The pregnant fact which should engage the notice of all nurses is, that whereas our infant mortality rate continues high, the birth-rate has steadily declined for the past 30 years, falling from 36.3 in 1876 to 26.3 in 1907. Nurses in general, and monthly nurses and

midwives in particular, have a great power in their hands in this matter. The encouragement of a natural and healthy life, the discouragement of the many artificial and unnatural means now adopted very generally amongst women to prevent conception, the care of children in the first stages of life, not only as a direct means of checking infant mortality, but also as forming the groundwork of a healthy family, bringing forth healthy men and women, the promotion of hygiene and a rational knowledge of health subjects amongst the rich, as well as amongst the poor, are objects the importance of which cannot be too seriously kept in view by every nurse, and especially by those members of our profession who, in private nursing or in nursing homes, are brought into the most intimate relation with their patients at a time when they are most impressionable. Many a quiet word spoken during convalescence by a conscientious and capable nurse has borne fruit which she little expected and would have been astonished to realise as the outcome of her gentle teaching. The hygiene of the nation is very closely bound up with our work. Many a mother, to take a pregnant instance, would find cause for reflection if it were clearly brought before her that the rate of infant mortality under the same unhealthy conditions is far greater amongst English babies than amongst Jewish, Italian, and Irish ones, and the reason given by two authorities is that "the parents amongst these races care for their infants to a much greater extent than do the English."

The mortality of children is greatest where the mothers are under 20 years of age, and lowest where they are from 30 to 35. Long ago Shakespeare had grasped this fact. "The baby of a *girl*," is his contemptuous epithet. But here in England sufficient stress is not yet laid upon the fact that the child of an immature, undeveloped mother must in all probability be a weakling. Alcoholism brings the deaths of children under two years up to double the rate of the deaths of those of temperate parents, not only from the circumstances of their environment after birth, but also from pre-natal causes. It is less generally known how intimate is the relation between the health of the nursing mother and that of her child. Budin has given us diagrams, showing the loss in weight in the infant occurring in the case of (1) A woman nursing her own baby and two others, the weights declining concurrently with a condition of nervous irritability, leading to an outbreak of temper, in all three children; (2) a wet nurse, having

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