

LORD LISTER'S APPEAL FOR THE GENERAL LYING-IN HOSPITAL, LAMBETH.

Lord Lister, the President of the General Lying-in Hospital, York Road, Lambeth, urges in the press the claims of this excellent charity. He states that the cost of the improvements recently carried out, in providing better accommodation for the patients and nursing staff, has so crippled the resources of the institution that unless the hospital receives increased support its income will not suffice to meet its expenditure.

THE MATERNITY DEPARTMENT OF ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL, MANCHESTER.

We regret to notice in the last Clinical Report of the Maternity Department of St. Mary's Hospital, Manchester, prepared by Dr. W. Fletcher Shaw, Resident Surgical Officer, a decrease in the number of cases attended by 1,049, which is due to the fact that the area attended by the hospital midwives has been restricted owing to lack of funds, and the number of beds in the hospital has been reduced from 40 to 20 for the same reason. At a time when, on all hands, we hear of the necessity for increased facilities for training midwives, this is specially regrettable.

Fifty-six maternity pupils were trained during the year, and a change has been made in the system of training which must be beneficial to the pupils. "Instead of spending the whole of the period of four months in the wards, as formerly, they now spend two months in the wards, and during the other two months attend cases at their own homes, in the vicinity of the hospital, under the supervision of three Maternity Sisters who reside in the hospital but attend district cases exclusively. In this way the pupil is able to put into practice, in difficult surroundings, the theory which she has learnt in the wards, where everything is to her hand, in a way she will find impossible when she has to practise on her own account."

Sixteen patients died in the maternity wards during the year, out of 468 admissions, the high death rate being partly attributable to the fact that all serious cases arising in the district were transferred to the hospital.

OXYGEN IN PUERPERAL INFECTION.

Dr. Regnier, in a foreign medical journal quoted by the *British Medical Journal*, publishes a communication on the treatment of certain forms of puerperal infection by a continuous current of oxygen. After stating his experience that the admission of an infected febrile case amongst those who have been similarly affected but whose temperatures have returned to normal is liable to be fraught with the reinfection of the entire ward, he gives conclusions based on 552 septic cases, two-thirds of which were due to abortion for the most part self-induced, the remainder following delivery at full term either at home or at the house of a midwife. He points out that the causes of puerperal sepsis are many, that infections due to gonococci, streptococci, aerobic and anaerobic saprophytes differ in their localisation, prognosis, and treatment. A differential diagnosis is therefore of the utmost importance. In a saprophytic

infection, though there be possibly a grave general condition, the affection may remain local for a long time. Examination of the external genitals reveals a fetid lochia, the vulva is covered with a grey mucilaginous discharge and any sores present are of a dull, lustreless character. In a frankly streptococcal infection the uterine discharge ceases, following the onset of a sudden rigor, the sores dry and the abdomen becomes tympanitic, indicating the speedy passage of the streptococci from the uterus to the peritoneal cavity. Again, in infections where the anaerobes predominate and the vagina is covered by false membranes all cutting operations are contraindicated. In such cases there is a unanimous consensus of opinion in favour of antiseptic injections—for example, those of permanganate or oxygenated or iodised water. Unfortunately these are frequently inefficacious. A knowledge of the marvellous antiseptic properties of oxygen which Professor Thierciar of Brussels has used with much success in the treatment of gaseous phlegmons, which he limits by injecting bubbles of the gas, led to the adoption of the following method in cases of uterine sepsis: Having washed out the cavity of the womb with oxygenised water, the apparatus used, preferably one that maintains a patent cervix, is left in position, and to it is attached an indiarubber tube communicating with an oxygen cylinder. From this a constant current is passed in at low pressure for a period of several days. Notes on four serious cases are appended to the article indicating the rapidity of the fall in temperature and in the disappearance of the diphtheroid patches of the uterus, vagina, and vulva. In all cases, however, other remedies were employed.

THE STORY OF A LIFETIME.

"The Story of a Lifetime," by Lady Priestley, contains an account of maternity work in King's College Hospital during the sixties, which cannot fail to interest nurses. Dr. Priestley's ward, "The Nightingale Ward," for maternity cases, was on the top flat above one of the general wards. Further down was the great surgical ward, of which Sir William Fergusson had charge, and below was the post-mortem room. Everything would go well for a season. Then, for some reason not understood, joy would be turned into sadness, the prevailing peace would be broken, and the contented faces of one day would the next be "scarred by the crooked autograph of pain." One significant fact stood out like the index finger on a sign post, pointing to the door where the lift came up as the point of danger, for the women on the top floor who lay nearest that door were invariably the first stricken with puerperal fever." Strange to us to-day seems the question addressed to Dr. Priestley by Professor Sir James G. Simpson, of Edinburgh. "Do I dream or not as to hearing you state that since your obstetric ward was closed you had reason to suspect that its air, might have been deteriorated from the dissecting room being placed two or three storeys below?" Sir James did not live to see the problem of "hospital complications" solved, for he died in 1870, the year after Lord Lister was appointed to the Chair of Surgery in the University of Edinburgh.

E. A. S.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)