

The Royal Maternity Charity of London.

Mr. Cornelius Barham, C.C., Chairman of the Royal Maternity Charity, presided on Tuesday last at the annual meeting, which was held at 28, Finsbury Square, E.C. The statistical report was presented by Major Killick, and showed that 2,351 cases were attended during the year. There were five deaths of mothers, the causes being respectively pneumonia, uræmia, malpresentation, faulty presentation necessitating difficult instrumental delivery, and accidental hæmorrhage. Thirty-seven deaths of infants also occurred.

The report of the Medical Committee, signed by Dr. Septimus Sunderland, Dr. Russell Andrews, and Dr. Leonard Williams, showed that the surgeons of the Charity had been called into requisition no less than 191 times, proving that no opportunity was omitted of providing surgical or medical aid for those patients, either mothers or infants, whose condition gave anxiety at any time to the midwives. Nine pupils were trained in midwifery during the year, of whom four passed the examination of the Central Midwives' Board, one failed, and four at the close of the year had not gone up for the C.M.B. examination.

The financial statement of the training school for the year showed an estimated profit of £70 paid to the General Fund, and a balance at the bank of £88 18s. 11d. In connection with the annual balance sheet the report showed that from 1891 to 1904, £9,585 in Consols were sold out, and loans contracted for £5,600, making a total of £15,185 in thirteen years, denoting that the Charity was overspending its income by £1,168 annually. Since 1904 no Consols have been sold out, and loans and overdrafts have been contracted to the amount of £3,056, or £611 per annum, as against £1,168, thus effecting an annual saving of £557. It is satisfactory that the receipts of the past year exceeded those of 1908 by £318.

The adoption of the report was moved by Nurse Dawson, and seconded by Mrs. Killick, both being Governors of the Charity, and carried unanimously.

The General Committee was then re-elected with the exception of Dr. Victoria Bennett, and Mr. E. Guy Ridpath, who resigned. The vacancies were filled by the election of the Rev. E. T. Carter, Vicar of St. Matthias, City Road, E.C., and Mr. Harry Symington, 22, Fenchurch Street, E.C.

The Chairman, in responding to a vote of thanks, referred to the deep obligation the Charity was under to its Secretary, Major Killick, for his great fidelity and unselfish interest, and a very hearty vote of thanks was accorded to him. Major Killick in reply spoke most warmly of the work of the midwives of the staff, who he said were really the Charity. They were called out of bed at all hours and in all weathers, and not only so, but he knew that out of their own pockets they often helped the necessitous poor. He thought a vote of thanks should be accorded to them for their loyal help to the poor—God's poor.

The Waste of Infant Life.

The enormous waste of infant life, says Mr. E. T. Devine in the *Survey*, is a social problem of fundamental importance. How enormous the waste is we cannot exactly determine. It begins with the lives which are lost before they are born, the abortions and miscarriages which some French and English authorities have estimated are the end of one pregnancy out of every five. It includes next the children born dead, though at full term, which happens, as nearly as we can tell, in about 1 case in 28 in New York City. And the total is made up by the heart-breaking proportion of babies born alive who die before they reach the age of one year.

A decline in the birth rate can be contemplated without dismay. "I am not," said John Burns last year at the British National Conference on this same subject, "I am not for a desolating flood of babies." What we are "for" is that the child that has been conceived shall be born, that it shall be born with no preventable handicap, and that it shall meet no preventable difficulties on its journey through the first critical year of its life.

In New York City (Manhattan and Bronx Boroughs) at the present time about one-seventh of all the babies born die before they are a year old, and their deaths make up between one-fifth and one-fourth of all the deaths that occur in the course of a year.

This seems appalling, but it is a record which compares not unfavourably with many others, even the State of Massachusetts and England and Wales. Many European countries and many smaller cities in the United States lose a larger proportion of their babies.

The encouraging feature in New York is the decrease that can be seen in the last forty years. Since 1866, when the Board of Health was established, and we began to have trustworthy records of deaths, the number of deaths at all ages has indeed increased considerably, but it has not increased by any means so fast as the population has, and the actual number of deaths under one year of age has not only not increased much since the beginning of the period but has even been decreasing in the last fifteen years.

The child born in the country has, at present, a decided advantage over the one born in the city. The infant mortality in the registration cities of the United States in 1900 was nearly 50 per cent. higher than in the rural part of the registration States. But, going to England again, we find an interesting bit of evidence in behalf of the city. Comparing London and certain rural counties, it appears that while the baby born in London is more likely to die before it reaches its first birthday than the baby born in the country, it has just as good a chance to complete the first month of life, and actually a better chance to live through the first week. In other words, the disadvantage of the city does not begin to operate until after the first month, while in the first week there is a distinct advantage, on account of the prompt and better medical care available for all grades of income.

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