

The Midwife.

Pemphigus Neonatorum.

Dr. Margaret Merry Smith, D.P.H., describes in the *British Medical Journal* an outbreak of pemphigus neonatorum occurring in the practice of a midwife in Manchester. She says:—

The disease is not very common, but isolated cases and epidemics occur. Improved hygiene and the use of antiseptic and aseptic methods in midwifery practice have made it rarer than formerly. The characteristic of the disease is that during the first week or two of life an eruption appears on the skin of the infant. The eruption is first noticed as an isolated bulla about the size of a threepenny piece, containing clear or yellowish fluid. This bulla increases in size and ruptures, leaving a raw base. Meanwhile other bullæ appear, the size and rapidity with which these develop depending on the severity of the case. Maguire very fully describes the development of these bullæ. The site most frequently affected is the lower part of the abdomen and the groins, but bullæ may be present on any part of the body except the palms and the soles.

There are two forms—a benign and a malignant—but both may occur in one epidemic. In the malignant type general septicæmia sets in after the bullæ have appeared, and the issue is fatal. The umbilicus is probably the avenue through which general infection takes place, the lower part of the abdomen in such cases being extensively involved.

Maguire gives the period elapsing between infection and development of the bullæ as two to four days. In the benign type the average duration of the bullæ is from two to three weeks. In the fatal cases death may occur any time within three weeks after the onset. In the rapidly fatal cases death may take place in four days. It is not always possible to trace the source of the disease, but it is without doubt contagious, and epidemics in maternity hospitals and in the practice of midwives are described. The bacteriology has not been definitely settled, but it is believed to be a streptococcal infection.

The treatment advocated is to avoid infection of the umbilicus and of fresh skin from the fluid in the bullæ; to apply mild antiseptic washes, powders, and ointments, and in malignant cases to give stimulants and apply warmth. The attendant should not wash or handle another newborn child until after thorough disinfection of her hands, person, clothing, and appliances.

THE PASSING BELL.

We greatly regret to record the death of Dr. Stanley B. Atkinson, the representative of the Midwives' Institute on the Central Midwives' Board, which took place suddenly last week. Dr. Atkinson's attitude to midwives was always a liberal-minded one, and his active participation, and common sense views, in all discussions of the Board will be greatly missed.

Infancy.

An admirable manual is published under this title, as the first of a series of "National Health Manuals," by Robert Culley, 25-35, City Road, and 26, Paternoster Row, E.C., price 1s. The Editor is Dr. T. N. Kelynnack, and the booklet contains a series of articles written by medical experts which, the editor tells us in his preface, are "intended to afford concise and up-to-date scientific presentation of the principles and practices which guide and govern the establishment and maintenance of personal, domestic, and national health."

"As far as possible technical phraseology has been avoided. It is hoped that both in arrangement and in substance these hand-books will be suited to the requirements of all thoughtful men and women."

The first chapter is contributed by the Editor, whose opening words show the importance of the subject. He writes:—

"There is no Wealth but Life,' is the great truth which Ruskin has revealed to all students of social progress. Our national treasure is hidden in life's beginnings. The wisdom and wealth of the future lie in the cradle of infancy. All designs for human betterment should begin with the infant. The records regarding infant births, mortality, and morbidity, afford reliable data whereby to gauge the efficiency of a people. The statistics relating to this country are startling. The Registrar-General shows that: 'If a comparison is made among European countries, it is found that in the years 1880-2 there were no fewer than six States in which the fertility of wives was less than that recorded in England and Wales, whereas twenty years later (1900-2) the rate of fertility among married women in England and Wales was, with the exception of France lower than that recorded in any other European country.' Great Britain and some of her Colonies are adopting a policy which is slowly making for social and national suicide."

Dr. J. B. Hellier, Professor of Obstetrics in the University of Leeds, follows with a chapter on "The Anatomy and Physiology of the Infant"; Sir William J. Thompson, M.D., Physician to Jervis Street Hospital, Dublin, writes of "The Hygiene of Infancy"; Dr. James Stewart Fowler writes on "The Feeding of Infants," and Dr. A. Dingwall Fordyce, Extra Physician, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh deals with "Common Disorders of Infancy, and their Prevention."

DISORDERS OF FEEDING.

In connection with the Disorders of Feeding the writer says:—

Mother's milk is pure and clean; all artificial food must also be pure and clean.

In the dietary of an infant, hand-fed, the three great desiderata are: (a) *Cleanliness* of food and

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)