

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

ENUMERATE THE PRINCIPAL REASONS FOR THE DECREASE IN INFANT MORTALITY IN RECENT YEARS. HOW CAN TRAINED NURSES AND MIDWIVES ASSIST IN SECURING A CONTINUAL DECREASE?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Florence Bloy, St. George's Infirmary, Fulham Road, S.W., for her paper on the above question.

PRIZE PAPER.

Broadly speaking, the decrease in infant mortality in recent years is due to the increased sensitiveness of the public to the needs and claims of the child before and after birth.

This has resulted in the following means being taken (by legislation or charitable enterprise) to protect and preserve child life.

1. The increased purity of the milk supply by constant supervision and frequent analysis, the establishment in some cases of a municipal milk depôt.
2. Improvement in housing conditions, since in many cases the infant spends its whole life up to one year of age in the home.
3. The passing of the Midwives Act, which excludes untrained women from attendance at births.
4. The notification of Births Act, which enables the Public Health Authority to have its eye on the child from the first day of birth. (This Act is, unfortunately, optional.)
5. The Children's Act of 1908.
6. The appointment of an increased number of women health visitors, district nurses, &c., and the resultant education of the working woman in the elementary laws of hygiene and infant management.
7. The establishment of kitchens for the feeding of nursing mothers.
8. The establishment crèches, so that infants are well looked after during their mothers' absence at work.

Trained nurses and midwives can assist in securing a continual decrease in infant mortality by the following means:—

1. By carrying out their professional duties efficiently and conscientiously.
2. By being tactful and courteous in dealing with their patients, gaining their confidence and using their opportunity to instruct the mothers where necessary in the care of infants, personal hygiene, &c.
3. By keeping a sharp look-out for and advising treatment of venereal disease, especially in pregnant women, and persuading such patients to persist in treatment until cured;

also in instructing infected mothers in the means for preserving their children from infection.

4. By interesting themselves in any scheme, legislative or otherwise, whose object is the improvement of the condition of working women both before, during, and after their confinement.

5. By encouraging the mother to prepare beforehand, if possible, for her confinement, and instructing her as to the judicious expenditure of the maternity benefit that will soon be hers.

6. By carefully reporting to the proper authority any insanitary conditions or neglect.

7. By doing all they can to hasten the time when women representatives shall be found on all public committees, &c., that have to deal directly or indirectly with the public health.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention: Miss Anna M. Cameron (Bournemouth), Miss G. Thomson (London), Miss O'Brien (Cork), Miss C. Jackson (Bournemouth), Miss A. Jenkins (Liverpool).

Miss Cameron mentions, amongst other contributory causes to the decrease in infant mortality of recent years, the efforts of physicians and surgeons to find adequate remedies to combat and counteract infantile diseases, the labours of trained nurses and midwives working everywhere, the good work done by health visitors, the weeding out of the uncleanly Gamp, improved sanitary conditions, the decrease of drunkenness in both men and women helped by the clergy working in poor districts, the efforts of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the publicity given to alleged cases of baby farming, and the good work done by the professional nursing journals, which help to keep alive a nurse's sense of her deep responsibilities.

Miss G. Thomson writes that the fuller knowledge spread by lectures and suitable literature is a potent means of influencing the infant mortality rate. She considers that working-class mothers throughout the country eagerly desire instruction, and follow teaching they receive both by these means and through lectures and literature with pathetic fidelity.

Miss C. Jackson is of opinion much more might be done if the working classes employed midwives throughout the lying-in period as often a friend or relative attends the patient after delivery by the doctor, or, what is sometimes worse, a woman calling herself a monthly nurse, but who has had no training, and who is ignorant and dirty, and who probably has

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