

in the first place, the use of antiseptics will tend to injure her living tissues, and will find no enemies of hers to kill. They must therefore be used only if and when there is reason to suppose that infection has been, or may have been introduced. Otherwise only sterile lotions—of which boiled water or 'physiological salt solution' is the type—must be permitted to come in contact with the patient's tissues, or at any rate those tissues of which the vital task of healing is about to be required. Under these conditions we may almost achieve the remarkable feat of reproducing, rivalling, if not surpassing in the modern city, the simplicity, safety, and ease with which we may doubtless credit primitive natural childbirth."

Referring to the granting of Old Age Pensions with an initial expenditure of some twelve million pounds per annum, the author says:—"Very little arithmetic is required to show what this sum would effect applied to the nation's maternity. . . . A birth-rate of twenty-five per thousand (and even that is higher, I do not doubt, than we shall ever see in Great Britain again) in a population of forty millions means one million births per annum. . . . Plainly, twelve million pounds for a million births provides us with twelve pounds to dispose of on each, even assuming that the money was required in each case, high or low.

"It is by no means asserted that we should withdraw Old Age Pensions, nor yet that we should proceed to spend twelve pounds apiece on each confinement, nor even that it would be wise, without paternal contributions, to undertake any State service of the sort. These are difficult questions, well worthy of discussion, but quite outside our present need. The points of the allusion to the pensions are two, and the first is that the money which would be required for the adequate care of every maternity case in the country is readily available; for Old Age Pensions alone consume already at least as much as would be required, on a liberal scale, for due attention before, during and after every confinement in the land. The expectant mother might have a month's freedom from work, whatever her class, before and after confinement, and the provision of a Listerian nurse and of a thoroughly competent and decently remunerated obstetrician of either sex, for twelve pounds or less. It is, indeed, no less than astonishing to discover how relatively trifling would be the cost of such a practice; and indeed, in general, what a very small proportion of the national income would be required for the vital purposes of the nation, compared with the huge sums which are misspent, wasted or worse. With one-twentieth part of the nation's annual expenditure on alcohol alone, it would be more than possible to provide due Listerian conditions for every mother who now goes without them.

"The second point of the allusion to Old Age Pensions is surely no less evident. How better could one illustrate the difference between a provident and an improvident nation, between statesmanship and politics? Mothers and infants have no votes. Many old age pensioners, and

many more who will some day qualify for pensions are among those upon whom politicians depend for their existence. Motherhood and infancy are thus ignored, whilst old age is provided for. Yet nothing could be more evident than that, if a wise nation were compelled to make a choice between provision for old age and provision for infancy, it would prefer to begin at the beginning, in the belief that rightly to provide for infancy is to lay the foundations of an old age which can provide for itself. The granting of Old Age Pensions was, of course, merely the beginning of an irresistible tendency, whereby more and more of the nation's total superfluity will be devoted to its localised needs. The needy will be dealt with, on the strictest political principles, in proportion to their voting power. . . . No doubt the granting of votes to women, when it comes, will have the effect of directing legislation to the great national needs for which I plead. The evidence of New Zealand, with its woman suffrage, protection of maternity, and the lowest rate of infant mortality in the Empire, is clear enough on that point."

A note at the end of this most interesting chapter states that it is printed as it was written before Mr. Lloyd George's speech in the House of Commons on May 4th, 1911, and in a later chapter the author discusses the possibilities in the new age now dawning.

In the thirty shilling maternity benefit provided for under the National Insurance Act we have a recognition of the principle of provision for maternity which may be regarded as a first instalment. We commend this book most earnestly to the attention of all midwives and obstetric nurses. It will illuminate them as to the supreme importance of the application of Listerian principles in their work, and the criminal negligence involved in any breach of their observance.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.

An important point was considered at a recent meeting of the Preston Board of Guardians when the Nursing Committee proposed that nurses in the employ of the Guardians should be allowed, under a scheme arranged by the Medical Officer, to take a sufficient number of maternity cases outside the Workhouse to enable them to qualify as certified midwives. It was stated that there were not sufficient maternity cases in the workhouse to give the nurses the necessary experience to qualify, and that it was of increasing importance in the nursing world that they should possess this qualification.

It is not clear whether it is proposed that the nurses who are receiving their training as midwives in the Preston Workhouse should attend in their own homes cases which would naturally come under the care of the Guardians, or whether it is suggested that they shall take *any* maternity cases within a given radius, and we are glad that the recommendation was referred back, with the

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