

The Midwife.

THE MIDWIFERY CONFERENCE.

INFANT FEEDING IN MIDWIFERY PRACTICE.

Dr. Annie McCall presided on Wednesday evening, April 23rd, at the Session of the Midwifery Conference at the L.C.C. Technical Institute, Vincent Square, S.W., when Dr. Eric Pritchard was the first speaker and took for his subject "Infant Feeding in Midwifery Practice." Dr. Pritchard remarked that midwives did not see the result of their work, they would be surprised sometimes to know what was said of them. If a baby throve the mother kept the credit, if the contrary, she referred the blame.

All parties would benefit very materially if midwives could follow up their cases in Infant Consultations. During the first few days of life infants formed habits which were apt to remain permanently stereotyped. Symptoms were not always manifest immediately. A large number of infants were what their mothers termed "beautiful born," but they then went slowly down hill. An infant almost invariably lost weight in the first few days because it passed meconium and urine, and this was not made good by what it imbibed, for at first the mother's breasts were only capable of secreting a few drachms of colostrum. The colostrum was a ready-made food, which could be absorbed straight away, but it should be remembered that the colostrum of a wet nurse did not bear the same relation to the infant as that of the mother. It might even act as a poison. If these matters were better understood we should not so often see a child supplied with foreign bodies acting as poisons. Thus if a poison were put into the stomach of an individual and absorbed it acted as a poison, but if broken up and digested it might act as a food. If an infant were taught in the right way it would soon learn to digest its mother's milk. The colostrum which was practically the blood plasma of the mother, was absorbed right away. Slowly and gradually the supply changed to milk. New proteid bodies must then be broken up, and this was within the infant's power, but it was different if in the first ten days of life the lesson was made too difficult. The whole capacity for learning was then upset. No new-born baby should under any circumstances be given cow's milk in its natural state, it must be pre-digested; at first completely, for forty-five minutes, with Benger's Liquor Pancreaticus, then for a shorter time, say one minute less every day, until in thirty days the time was reduced to fifteen minutes.

Dr. Pritchard advocated supplementing the mother's milk if this falls short by peptonized milk, and thought that if this method were followed

the baby would seldom be condemned to artificial food.

The speaker suggested the test-feed in order to ascertain whether the baby was getting enough nourishment or whether supplementary feeding was necessary.

In reply to a question from Miss Elsie Hall, Dr. Pritchard said that in district work he would recommend whey or ordinary condensed milk to supplement a deficiency in the maternal supply.

THE MIDWIFE TEACHER.

Miss Elsie Hall presented the next paper, the subject being "The Midwife Teacher." What, she asked, was expected of the midwife who signed forms 3 and 4 of the Central Midwives Board? She merely had to certify that, under her supervision, the pupil had attended and watched the progress of twenty labours, personally delivering the patients, and that she had nursed twenty lying-in women during the ten days following labour. There was nothing in the authority given her to suggest that she was in the office of teacher. Yet, let pupils go up for the examination of the Central Midwives Board with only the teaching they received from doctors and see what happened. Good work was being done by midwives approved to sign forms 3 and 4.

Miss Hall advocated that midwives taking pupils should be required to produce some certificate, or proof of their capacity to teach, and suggested an examination and supplementary certificate for teachers of midwifery.

THE MIDWIFE AS SUPERVISOR AND COACH.

Miss M. O. Haydon followed with a paper on "The Midwife as Supervisor and Coach," and affirmed that she should produce proof of ability before being permitted to coach a pupil midwife. "The one who teaches, and practically the midwife is the teacher, should know far more of her subject than she teaches and should therefore be required to pass an examination in advanced theoretical knowledge. She should know how to demonstrate and teach. With a few rare exceptions this is an art to be learnt, not a natural gift."

Miss Haydon remarked that the ignorance of some pupils was often astounding. Some hardly knew how many ounces there were in a pound, and it was a work of great patience to drill in that eight drachms made an ounce, and to teach them to read a thermometer, or to count a pulse correctly.

The Supervisor knew, as no one else knew, that a three months' course on a district was absurd for pupils of this class. It was too great a responsibility on teacher and taught. It was a mere "cram" from beginning to end. If the pupil had the luck to fall into the hands of a

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