

Now what does this prove? It proves that if the pregnant women were treated while they have albuminuria, and especially if they were treated early, we obstetricians could save a great number of maternal and infantile lives. And, mark you, we could save for the State the most valuable mothers, the young mothers, who, if saved, could produce numbers of healthy children.

It is quite unnecessary to labour this point and quite unnecessary to give more statistics. Every medical man knows that if pregnant women in the poorer classes were looked after properly an enormous number of maternal and infantile lives might be saved from the dangers of toxæmia and other complications of pregnancy. Many of these complications I might refer to, such as malpositions of the child, hæmorrhages, tumours, malformations of the parturient or birth canal, all of which, if recognized early in pregnancy or early labour, would result in an enormous saving of maternal and infantile lives.

It must not be imagined we are doing nothing for such cases. As a matter of fact we do everything we can to encourage prospective mothers to consult us at our maternity hospitals, but except when the complications have become specially serious we seldom see these women.

We obstetricians must have the assistance of those organizations which are concerned with infantile mortality, and above all we must have the assistance of the Public Health Authorities,

I have shown that there is a great number of mothers and children lost, and that there is a great number of mothers permanently injured and children born handicapped as regards health, as a result of the complications of pregnancy and parturition. I have also indicated, and I trust convinced many, that this can only be remedied by an Association such as yours, and by the Public Health Department coming to our aid.

But when one comes to consider the remedy for the existing unsatisfactory conditions, there must be great differences of opinion. To-day I can only give my own views on the matter. I advance my views with a certain amount of diffidence, for the problem is a difficult one, and the proposals I am about to make will, I feel certain, meet with much adverse criticism.

THE INTIMATION OF PREGNANCY.

Well, without further delay, let me say that after the most careful consideration of the whole matter I have come to the opinion that it is essential that intimation of pregnancy should be made compulsory. Now let us consider the advantages and the disadvantages or objections to such a radical step.

As regards the advantages, I shall merely enumerate them, for they are obvious. (1) Every pregnant woman could be looked after during her pregnancy, and the complications of pregnancy treated at an early stage. (2) Proper arrangements could be made for the woman's confinement and many of the more serious complications of parturition might be prevented. (3) Arrangements

for the care of the new-born could be made as regards food and clothing, many infantile deaths could be prevented, and many more children could be started in life healthy and well-nourished.

I might also mention that by this intimation of pregnancy a better control would be exercised over illegitimate births and the places and manner in which they occur.

But naturally the objections concern us most, for, although no possible bodily harm could result to pregnant women from compulsory intimation of pregnancy, they would undoubtedly be put to certain inconveniences.

Now it appears to me that the first objection which will be urged against intimation of pregnancy is that the private life of the individual would be disturbed. Apart altogether from those who become pregnant although unmarried, and who naturally desire to keep the knowledge of their condition to themselves, there is a considerable number of married women who, from modesty and other feelings, desire to keep the condition secret. One has of course every respect for such feelings, but I am convinced if it were explained to a representative body of women that intimation of pregnancy would be of the greatest possible benefit to all expectant mothers, and particularly young mothers pregnant for the first time, I feel certain that almost without exception they would agree that notification was desirable.

Remember that although pregnancy is a physiological condition, very frequently indeed at the present time from our mode of life and other causes it is not physiological, it is pathological. It may not have its hundreds of thousands of victims, as tuberculosis has, but believe me there are in this country many hundreds, yes several thousands, of mothers and many more children lost who need not be lost. They are lost because the expectant mother and the parturient succumb to complications which might have been prevented, and the State is responsible for their lives in so far that it fails to make any provision for the prevention of these complications.

Apart from the intimation of pregnancy the Public Health Authorities need not exercise any supervision over the women who elect to be attended by a medical practitioner. They will include women of the so-called upper middle and more prosperous working classes. What we must legislate for is the poorer members of the community who elect to be attended by midwives or the officials of a maternity hospital or maternity department of a general hospital.

Here then is where the Public Health Department might be of service, for I would propose that (in connection with the branches of a Maternity Hospital) there should be not only a maternity service but there should be an outdoor service for giving advice to expectant mothers and nursing mothers.

At certain hours advice should be given to pregnant women of the district who are ultimately to be attended by midwives or the out-door department of the maternity hospital. If the cases

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