

hand over a new earth to the generations which are to come.

"If the trust is faithfully undertaken, tremendous demands will be made upon us, but such a brotherhood will change the whole aspect of the world, for mankind will learn, because brothers have learned, that the cause of every man is the cause of all men, and the Cause of God."

### THE IMPORTANCE AND PREVENTION OF EAR DISEASE IN INFANCY.\*

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My first duty is to offer you my thanks for permitting me to contribute a paper to this Conference. You are dealing with a great question, the prevention of infant mortality and the welfare of infancy, and the work upon which I have set my heart is one in which we can be mutually assistant. I am at present helping, to the best of my ability, to promote a great movement, the prevention of deafness, initiated by the National Bureau for Promoting the General Welfare of the Deaf. This movement is one in which you can co-operate, for its success will be of material assistance to the realization of the excellent aims which this Conference has in view.

Those concerned with the prevention of deafness find themselves confronted with a double problem: the prevention of congenital deafness and that of the acquired form. The former is, perhaps, the more difficult task, but it is one which will have to be faced in the near future, and I do not propose to deal with it upon this occasion. The prevention of acquired deafness is, at present, much more within the range of practical politics, and will form the subject of this short paper. If we are to be successful in the prevention of acquired deafness in the adult, we must attack it in the child, and to be successful in the child we must attack first causes in the infant. The child we can reach now through the school, the infant before school age we must get at by such organizations as yours.

Nearly all cases of deafness in infancy and childhood are caused by one of three great

groups of causes: the infectious fevers, meningitis, and primary ear disease. Among the first-named, scarlet fever, diphtheria, measles, and congenital syphilis are the most responsible. Reference to the Annual Report of the Metropolitan Asylums Board for 1911 shows (pp. 118 to 120) that, during that year, ear complications occurred in the following percentages: scarlet fever, 11.42; diphtheria, 5.38; measles, 14.10; whilst enteric fever and whooping-cough were 3.5 and 4.9 respectively. These aural complications of the exanthemata are always serious and always dangerous. They not only destroy hearing, but they tend to kill, although a fatal result may be delayed for years. Their treatment taxes the skill of the otologist to the utmost, but by timely care and prompt intervention they can be prevented. The medical officers of fever hospitals are all good men, but they cannot know everything; they cannot be specialists in every complication they are called upon to deal with. What is wanted is the appointment of otologists to fever hospitals; we of the National Bureau are of opinion that a great deal could be done for the prevention of deafness from the exanthemata if this suggestion were carried out, and I have excellent reasons for believing that such appointments of specialists would be welcome to medical officers of fever hospitals.

With regard to congenital syphilis, I will merely point out certain cogent facts. It has been said that no disease, even tuberculosis, is so destructive of child life or so disastrous to child health as is congenital syphilis. It causes the most serious cases of blindness and deafness during and after school life, not to mention epilepsy and mental defects. Kerr Love has shown that a very appreciable number of cases of congenital deafness is due to it. Now, it was proved some years ago by Cheatle that the cases which become blind or deaf are those in which the disease was untreated in infancy. Surely the time has come for the more universal treatment of this terrible condition, and in order to facilitate such treatment of both mother and child, every case should be notified.

Let us take meningitis, which is another great cause of deafness in children. It is a condition which kills or maims thousands of children every year, and yet our knowledge of its true nature is at about the same stage as was that of typhus and typhoid seventy years ago, save that we have the advantage of the discovery of the bacterial nature of disease. Meningitis is due to many causes; what is required is research to elucidate these causes, what they are and how they act. Such re-

\* Read in the Medical Section of the Infant Mortality Conference, London, 1913.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)