

## The Midwife.

### CONFERENCE ON SUMMER DIARRHŒA.

There was a large and representative gathering at the Queen's Hospital for Children, Hackney Road, E., on the evening of March 11th, at the important Conference on Summer Diarrhœa, at which the Earl of Shaftesbury, K.P., K.C.V.O., President of the Hospital, presided.

The Chairman explained that the Conference had been called with the object of co-ordinating the various efforts that were now independently made. He read a letter from the Local Government Board which had been sent to all the Metropolitan Borough Authorities, urging co-operation with voluntary organisations in regard to matters of public health, and stated that the mortality amongst infants under one year in the three boroughs of Bethnal Green, Shoreditch and Hackney had been 517 in 1911, when there was a hot, dry summer, 161 in 1912 when the summer was wet and cold, and 443 in 1913, when the hot weather did not commence till the end of August. Special efforts were made by the Queen's Hospital for Children last year to combat the evil by distributing simply-worded instruction papers amongst the mothers, but it was felt that very little could be done without the co-operation of other charitable agencies and of the local Public Health Authorities. The Conference had therefore been called by the Committee of the Hospital, and it was hoped that it might result in practical measures of a preventive character being introduced. The Hospital, of course, received patients from all parts, but the cases of Summer Diarrhœa brought there mostly came from the three boroughs of Bethnal Green, Shoreditch and Hackney, which together had a population of close upon half a million, largely composed of the working classes, they were therefore confining the conference to representatives of these three great districts.

#### RESOLUTIONS.

The first Resolution was proposed by Dr. Porter Parkinson, Senior Physician to the Hospital, seconded by Dr. King Warry, Medical Officer of Health for Hackney, and supported by Mr. Pett Ridge, Miss E. J. Charlesworth, Senior Health Visitor of the Borough of Shoreditch, and Dr. Murray Leslie.

#### I.

"That epidemic Summer Diarrhœa is a preventable disease, dependent on a variety of conditions which can best be dealt with by concerted action on the part of Public Health Authorities and voluntary organisations; and that Borough Councils and Boards of Guardians be urged to seek the co-operation of voluntary organisations for the purpose of supplementing the work of the Borough Council's Visitors, with a view to arrang-

ing a complete and thoroughly efficient system of home visiting in every case, in order that treatment prescribed at Hospitals and other institutions, and by the general practitioners, may be enforced as far as possible. Further, that all medical charities and all medical practitioners be urged to undertake the voluntary notification to the Medical Officer of Health of all cases that may be brought to their notice."

In moving the Resolution Dr. Porter Parkinson said that the weather conditions in 1913 were not favourable to the disorder until the end of August. Mostly in the period of about six weeks from that time some 870 cases were brought for treatment. Of these 111 were admitted in a practically moribund condition, but 48 of them recovered under treatment in the wards. Want of room prevented larger numbers being admitted.

During the hot, dry summers of 1909, 1910, and 1911 these figures were nearly doubled as regards Out-patient work. The admissions had not been much greater owing to pressure on the beds in regard to other forms of illness, except in 1911, when 221 were admitted (115 died).

Simply-worded instruction papers and posters were distributed last year in the neighbourhood. The instruction paper was given to all mothers coming during August and September, whatever the disease of the patient. The poster was also displayed outside the Hospital.

*Almoner's Work.*—An important part of the duty of the Almoner was to make arrangements for the "health visiting" of mothers with infants under Out-patient Department. In the comparatively few cases that could be so visited under existing arrangements, excellent results had been obtained.

The second Resolution was moved by Dr. Eric Pritchard, seconded by the Mayor of Bethnal Green (Mr. Councillor W. J. Lewis, J.P.), and supported by Miss M. E. James, Bethnal Green Board of Guardians, and Dr. Charles Porter.

#### II.

"That this meeting recommends the adoption of one uniform plan for dealing with the problem of Summer Diarrhœa; recognises the importance of securing the goodwill and co-operation of the parents; and strongly urges upon charitable institutions, London County Council Care Committees, and other bodies concerned, the adoption of a system of reference to the Medical Officers of Health of the Boroughs before making arrangements for home visiting."

The third Resolution was proposed by Mr. Joseph Meller (Deputy Chairman of the House Committee), and seconded by Mr. D. W. Manpole.

#### III.

"That a representative Committee be now formed to approach the various interests concerned

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